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THE MOTHER OF THE LORD

Volume 1: The Lady in the Temple

MARGARET BARKER

BLOOMSBURY

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Margaret Barker

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This history of Israel is part of the faith by which we live, the New Testament cannot rightly be understood without understanding the Old, and the main reason why so many parts of the Old Testament are practically a sealed book even to thoughtful people is simply that they have not the historical key to the interpretation of that wonderful literature.

W. ROBERTSON SMITH, Preface to Wellhausen's *Prolegomena*

It is dangerous to argue as if we knew all the facts.

A. E. COWLEY, *Aramaic papyri*, p.xxi

Note

All biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, unless otherwise stated. All chapter and verse numbering is according to the English versions of the Bible. Hebrew is transliterated from the consonantal text, and only given with vowels (pointed) where this is necessary for clarity.

In memory of

Emma Thomas née Holliday

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PREFACE

This book grew both from conclusions drawn in my earlier work and also from paths that were left unexplored. Some of these paths were hardly visible, overgrown with assumptions and conventional translations. Others had been deliberately blocked. Always there was the challenge to open up again the link between the Hebrew Scriptures and the Church's use of them. Contemporary biblical scholarship often differs widely from the Church's way with the Bible, and so is of little help to the vast majority of those who use the Bible.

Ideas began to form in my mind after a conversation with the late David Melling. He had been listening to my thoughts about Wisdom imagery and the temple, and then asked if I knew of the Akathist Hymn. I did not, but it was a revelation to me in every sense of that word. Some of the titles by which the ancient Church had addressed and honoured Mary were obviously drawn from the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Old Testament; others were not. Thus began my quest for their origin, which seems to have been in the 'unwritten' traditions of the first temple, preserved in non-canonical texts and in memories. This volume is the first results of that quest.

I should like to thank all those who make my work possible; my patient family, especially my husband Richard; the staff of the Cambridge University Library; and my friends in the Temple Studies Group who draw my attention to all sorts of interesting things they have come across in their own reading.

I should like to dedicate this book to the memory of my own mother.

Margaret Barker
Pentecost 2012

INTRODUCTION

At the very end of the New Testament John described the holy of holies that he saw in his vision. There was the throne of God and the Lamb, there was the river of the water of life, and there was the tree of life. The servants of God and the Lamb saw his face and had his name on their foreheads. They stood in a place of perpetual heavenly light, needing neither lamp nor sun, and they reigned for ever (Rev.22.1-5). For the first Christians, this was their vision of heaven.

They were standing in the temple, but not the temple rebuilt by Herod and completed only a few years earlier. They were standing in the temple as it should have been, as it had once been and as they hoped it soon would be, because in their vision they were standing in the true temple. The temple they knew – or had known, since there is no way of dating this vision – had neither heavenly throne nor tree of life in the holy of holies. Josephus says that at the end of the second temple period, the holy of holies was empty.[1]

In another part of his vision of the temple, John saw the ark (Rev.11.19) which had been lost for centuries. Later tradition remembered it had disappeared in the time of King Josiah, during the temple purges of 623 BCE. It would be restored in the time of the Messiah, along with the other things that had been in the first temple but not in the second: the fire, the menorah, the Spirit and the cherubim.[2] Since the temple furnishings symbolised the temple teachings,[3] this was saying that the faith of the second temple was very different from the faith of the original temple.

When the ark was hidden, so too were its contents: the jar of manna and Aaron's rod that budded, and also the true anointing oil. These too would return when the Messiah restored the true temple.[4] Now the writer of Hebrews assumed that these had been restored: s/he said that in the holy of holies were the ark of the covenant, the urn of manna, Aaron's rod that budded and the overshadowing cherubim (Heb.9.3-5). This early Christian writer was thinking in terms of the first temple, and so, we assume, did the other early Christians. Not only did they know of the manna restored, of Aaron's rod, of the cherubim and the ark, but by proclaiming Jesus as

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[1] Josephus, *War* 5.219.
[2] *Numbers Rabbah* XV.10.
[3] Origen, *On Numbers*, Homily 4.
[4] Babylonian Talmud *Horayoth* 12a.

the Messiah, they implied the restoration of the anointing oil. They also said the fire and the Spirit were given at Pentecost (Acts 2.3-4). But what of the menorah, the last of the missing items? It seems that the menorah represented the tree of life, which John saw restored to the holy of holies as the climax of his vision (Rev.22.2).

There had been a menorah in the second temple; it was depicted on the arch of Titus as part of the loot taken from the temple when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 CE. Why, then, did tradition imply that the menorah was missing from the second temple and would be restored by the Messiah? Some people cannot have recognised the menorah of the second temple as the true menorah. The description of the desert tabernacle, which reflects the situation in the second temple, says the menorah was in the outer part of the tent, on the southern side (Exod.40.24), and only the ark was within the holy of holies (Exod.40.20-21). To be consistent with the other restoration claims implied by New Testament texts, John must have been remembering the menorah lost from the first temple, and he saw it as the tree of life in the holy of holies (Rev.22.2).

The great changes to the temple and its furnishings happened in the time of Josiah. As we shall see, the Old Testament texts do not mention the tree of life or the menorah being removed from the temple, but the centrepiece of the purges was the destruction of an *'asherah*, known elsewhere as a tree-like object. Others remembered that the Queen of Heaven had been abandoned at this time, and that Wisdom had been rejected. There had been a Lady in the holy of holies in the first temple.

There had been many attempts to remove her; imagery in the Hebrew Scriptures suggests that Josiah's was the last of many attempts to remove her, and that he was successful because the Babylonians destroyed the temple a few years later. Imagine the Lady's great tree dragged from the temple on the holy mountain and burned; and then the proclamation of a new style of religion that recognised only the LORD and not the Lady. This memory shaped the story of Moses on the holy mountain, who heard a voice from a burning bush [tree?] telling him that the God of the fathers would from that time be known as Ehyeh or Yahweh, the LORD; it shaped Ezekiel's picture of the guardian cherub who abused wisdom and so was cast from the holy mountain and burned to ashes on earth; it shaped the Isaian oracle of hope – now almost unreadable – that even though the holy tree would be burned again, the stump would preserve the holy seed and branches would sprout again. When the returned exiles were about to rebuild the temple, Zechariah saw the same golden tree with two figures on either side – a priest and a king, but at peace with each other.

A vast spectrum of material points to this pattern of events, and in this first volume I shall present evidence for the lost Lady of the first temple and for her first exile. She was removed from texts by the work of ancient scribes and the assumptions of biblical scholars. In the second volume I

shall show how she survived during the time of the second temple, and how her temple was finally restored by the Christians.

The Lady of the first temple was remembered as the Virgin and as Miriam, and her many titles and roles survived – we do not know how or where – and appeared intact in the Marian devotion of the early Church. The first Christians knew, taught and believed far more than is recorded in the New Testament, and so tracing the Lady is often a matter of listening for echoes, watching for shadows and piecing together the shards of history. Above all, it is a matter of spotting where Hebrew texts have been changed by the 'restoring' scribes whose role was to remove shameful things from Scripture. At some stage, *one* letter was changed in Isaiah, thus obscuring the most important of all the Lady's titles (Isa.7.11): she was the Mother of the LORD. John saw her appear again in the holy of holies, 'a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars' (Rev.12.1). She gave birth to the Messiah.

Wisdom is radiant and unfading,
And she is easily discerned by those who love her,
And is found by those who seek her.
She hastens to make herself known to those who desire her.
He who rises early to seek her will have no difficulty,
For he will find her sitting at the gates.
To fix one's thought on her is perfect understanding,
And he who is vigilant on her account will soon be free from care,
Because she goes about seeking those worthy of her,
And she graciously appears to them in their paths,
And meets them in every thought.

Wisdom of Solomon 6.12-16 (my translation)

1

The End of the First Temple

Josiah

The quest for the Mother of the Lord begins with Josiah, a boy king, or whoever actually had power in Jerusalem whilst he was young. He came to the throne in 640 BCE[1] when he was 8 years old and reigned for 31 years. There are two accounts of his reign: one in 2 Kings and the other in 2 Chronicles, and they are very different. According to the Chronicler, he began to change the religious practices of Jerusalem and Judah in the twelfth year of his reign (2 Chron.34.3). To give the context for his reign, we note that Jeremiah was called to be a prophet in the following year (Jer.1.2), although it is not entirely clear what Jeremiah thought of Josiah's work. Zephaniah, the other prophet active in the reign of Josiah, was unambiguous: the Lord was about to destroy all worshippers of Baal, all idolatrous priests, all who venerated the host of heaven (Zeph.1.4-6). Jerusalem was rebellious, defiled and oppressing (Zeph.3.1). This fits perfectly with the Chronicler's account of Josiah destroying the high places, the Asherim and the images, the altars of the Baals and the altars of incense, although the Chronicler did not mention any *purge* of the temple. It was a cultural revolution. Josiah's purges extended beyond his own territory into the tribal lands of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon and Naphtali. 'Then he returned to Jerusalem.' (2 Chron.34.7).

Six years later, according to the Chronicler, in the eighteenth year of his reign, Josiah began to refurbish the temple in Jerusalem. Money was collected from Judah and the remnant of Israel – Israel had been conquered and devastated by the Assyrians a century earlier – and used to repair the temple which recent kings of Judah had neglected (2 Chron.34.11). During the restoration, the high priest Hilkiah found 'the book of the law of the Lord given through Moses' (2 Chron.34.14). When the book was read to Josiah,

[1] All the dates for the Hebrew kings are approximate.

he feared that the LORD would punish him and his people because they had not observed the law of the LORD. Huldah the prophetess prophesied destruction of the kingdom and its people, but Josiah, she said, would die in peace because he had repented of the evil ways of his ancestors. The king then went to the temple and gave a public reading of 'all the words of the book of the covenant' (2 Chron.34.30). The covenant – and it was probably a new style of covenant – will prove to be an important theme in our search for the Lady.[2] There are no details in 2 Chronicles of any changes to the temple in Jerusalem at this time; only the Deuteronomic writer [hereafter D][3] recorded these (2 Kgs 23.4-14). The king then prepared to celebrate a great Passover, the like of which had not been seen since the time of Samuel (2 Chron.35.18), despite the Chronicler's account of Hezekiah's Passover (2 Chron.30.1-27). Everything about Josiah's Passover was very different from the Passover prescribed in Exodus, everything except the date: both fell on the fourteenth day of the first month (Exod.12.2, 6; 2 Chron.35.1). The simple domestic celebration described in Exodus 12 was transformed into an elaborate temple festival, with musicians and the slaughter of a huge number of animals (2 Chron.35.7-9, 15).[4] The events surrounding his death are unclear. When the law book was found, he consulted Huldah the woman prophet, who said that the curses in the law book would be fulfilled, but because the king had humbled himself and repented, he would die in peace before the evil came upon the land and its people (2 Chron.34.19-28). This prophecy was not fulfilled. He died a violent death in battle against the Egyptians at Megiddo. Even though he was in disguise, the archers shot him (2 Chron.35.20-24).

The account of Josiah in 2 Kings is very different, possibly because the writer shared many of the ideals of Deuteronomy.[5] Even the story of his death lacks significant detail: Pharoah Neco killed him in battle at Megiddo, we are told, and the detail of the arrow that pierced him is omitted (2 Kgs 23.29). The most significant differences, however, are in the account of the 'reform'. Whereas the Chronicler said that the old law book had been found *during* the restoration of the temple, the writer of 2 Kings said that finding the law book had *prompted* Josiah's actions. Neither the D writer nor the Chronicler says how the law book came to be in the temple, nor how it had been so neglected. It was simply there. We are invited to believe that the law

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[2] See below pp.218–29.

[3] This term is widely used to indicate writers influenced by the characteristic style and interests of Deuteronomy.

[4] A fuller account of Josiah's Passover is found in 1 Esdras 1.1-24.

[5] The relationship between Deuteronomy and Samuel-Kings is not clear. '… very similar ideologies pervade Deuteronomy and Kings … there are also considerable tensions between these texts.' For summary and bibliography, see F. Stavrakopoulou, *King Manasseh and Child Sacrifice. Biblical Distortions of Historical Realities*, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004, p.21.

book was Deuteronomy, and as with the Chronicler's account, it was called 'the book of the covenant' (2 Kgs 23.2). The writer's sympathies are clear, presenting the changes as a great reform, a return to the ways prescribed in Deuteronomy. Before Josiah 'there was no king like him who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his mind, according to all the law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him' (2 Kgs 23.25). Josiah carried out the programme prescribed in Deuteronomy: he destroyed the shrines of the other nations on the high places and under the trees, he tore down their altars, pillars, Asherim, and images, and removed their name from the land (Deut.12.2-3), and he purged the temple. The work was in effect completed by the Babylonian conquest and destruction of Jerusalem a few years later. Thus Wellhausen observed:

> To induce the people to regard as idolatrous and heretical centres of iniquity the Bamoth, with which from ancestral times the holiest memories were associated … required a complete breaking of the national tradition of life, a total severance of all connection with inherited conditions. This was accomplished by means of the Babylonian exile …[6]

Not everyone agreed with the writer of 2 Kings. Despite the recent custom among scholars of describing the purges as 'Josiah's reform', the other points of view must be borne in mind when trying to reconstruct what actually happened. One generation after Josiah, when Jerusalem had fallen to the Babylonians and the temple was destroyed, there were refugees in Egypt who blamed the disaster on what Josiah had done. This, they said, was the time when Jerusalem abandoned the worship of the Queen of Heaven, who had formerly protected the city (Jer.44.15-23). The present text of Jeremiah says that he disagreed, and so the debate was: did abandoning the Queen of Heaven cause the disaster, or had worshipping her caused the disaster? Unfortunately, the text of the book of Jeremiah has been much reworked, as we shall see,[7] and it is no longer certain what the prophet himself believed. The Enoch tradition agreed with the refugees, as did some later writings, and a careful rereading of even the biblical texts shows that not everyone welcomed the actions of Josiah. Abandoning the Queen of Heaven had left Jerusalem without protection, and so the first stage in any attempt to rediscover this Lady is reconstructing the religion of Jerusalem before the time of Josiah. One way into this is to examine the beliefs of those who opposed Josiah.

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[6] J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, ET Edinburgh: A&C Black, 1885, p.28.
[7] See below, pp.54–75.

In Search of Other Voices

The opposing voices are heard in many places:

- in accounts of the history of Jerusalem which have a very different emphasis from those in the Hebrew Scriptures;
- in ancient biblical texts that differ from those used for most English translations;
- in all the many apparently unconnected details that do not fit easily into the 'biblical' account of what happened;
- in folk memory and tradition.

These other voices are surprisingly consistent in their account of what happened in the time of Josiah.

First, the alternative history. One section of *1 Enoch,* an anthology treated as Scripture by the early Christians and much used at Qumran, is a stylised history known as the *Apocalypse of Weeks*, because it divides history into eras known as 'weeks'. It covers broadly the same events as the Hebrew Scriptures but has a very different point of view. In the sixth week – the time of the monarchy – the godless people in the temple became 'blind' and abandoned Wisdom just before the temple was burned and the people scattered. Those who set up the second temple and its cult in the seventh week, that is, *those who collected and edited the Hebrew Scriptures as we know them, were described as apostates*.[8] This shows that the story of 'Israel' as usually told, was only one point of view. Other heirs to the ancient faith of Jerusalem told a different history, and from the *Apocalypse of Weeks*, it seems that the Queen of Heaven who had been abandoned was also known as Wisdom.

> And after that, in the sixth week, all who live in [the temple] shall be blinded,
> And the hearts of all of them shall godlessly forsake Wisdom.
> And in it a man shall ascend;
> And at its close, the house of dominion shall be burned with fire,
> And the whole race of the chosen
> root shall be dispersed.
> And after that, in the seventh week, shall an apostate generation arise,
> And many shall be its deeds,
> And all its deeds shall be apostate. (*1 Enoch* 93.8-9)

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[8] Thus Wellhausen, op.cit., n.6 above, p.28 'The new generation had no natural, but only an artificial, relation to the times of old … From the exile there returned not a nation but a religious sect.'

In the *Apocalypse of Weeks,* the Law was given in the fourth 'week', but there was no mention of the Exodus. The heroes of the *Apocalypse of Weeks* were Enoch, Noah and Abraham, but there was no Moses. One explanation could be that history was told like this in Jerusalem before the Exodus and Moses material was incorporated, that is, before the present form of the Pentateuch was compiled during the exile or the early years of the second temple era. It could have been 'history' as it was told before Josiah made Deuteronomy and the Moses traditions dominant in Jerusalem. This would have been the story that refugees in Egypt told to Jeremiah. The Enoch account implies that the 'history' in the Pentateuch is the work of the apostates, but does not name them. Wellhausen, at the beginning of his account of the history of Israel, said this of the Pentateuch: 'We cannot, then, peremptorily refuse to regard it as possible that what was the Law of Judaism may also have been its product.'[9] Enoch implies that it was 'the Jews' who changed the ancient ways.

There are curious aspects of the Hebrew Scriptures that suggest a different form of religion in Jerusalem before Josiah. A remarkable feature of the earliest [that is, pre-Josianic] material in Isaiah of Jerusalem (Isa.2-12) is that there is no obvious reference to Moses and the Exodus, but there is much in common with the Enoch tradition.[10] 'One of the peculiar things one finds in enquiring into the prophet's relation to the tradition of his people is the scarcity if not total absence of an appeal or reference to the Exodus from Egypt.'[11] What 'religion' did Isaiah know in Jerusalem, a century before Josiah's purges? Was it the religion of the Enoch tradition? This is why the question: 'What did Josiah reform?' is the starting point for any investigation into the lost Lady of the temple, because both the refugees and *1 Enoch* agree that a female figure – Wisdom/the Queen of Heaven – was abandoned at this time.

Second, there is the evidence in ancient biblical texts that differ from those used for most English translations. These biblical accounts of Josiah's work do not mention the rejection of a female figure, and so must be read with caution. She must be concealed somewhere within the accounts, presumably because she was too abominable to mention by name. Concealing the unmentionable was a well known characteristic of the scribes who transmitted the texts, and this causes considerable problems for any investigation that is primarily text-based. The process was called *tiqqûnê sôp^{e}rîm*, the restorations of the scribes. 'Rabbinical literature and the marginal and final Massorah of many Hebrew Bible codices record

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[9] Wellhausen, op.cit., n.6, p.3.

[10] See my book *The Older Testament*, London: SPCK, 1987, pp.125–41.

[11] Thus T. C. Vriezen, 'Essentials of the Theology of Isaiah' in B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson, eds, *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honour of James Muilenberg*, London: SCM, 1962, pp.128–46, p.129.

that the scribes[12] altered the text in a small but hardly negligible number of passages. The changes were deliberate departures from the previous state of the text.'[13] These 'restorations' were attributed to Ezra and the men of the great synagogue,[14] and the rulings were based on the earliest description of reading Scripture in the second temple community, when Ezra and his Levites read the law by the Water Gate in Jerusalem. 'And they read from the book, from the law of God, clearly; and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading' (Neh.8.8). 'R. Isaac said: The textual reading as transmitted by the *soferim* (scribes), their stylistic embellishments, words read in the text but not written, and words written but omitted in the reading, are all *halachah* from Moses on Sinai.'[15] In every case, the alteration was said to avoid blasphemy.

After the advent of Christianity, which based so much of its proclamation on the fulfilment of Scripture, there were many reasons for Jewish scribes to further 'correct' the Hebrew texts, and early in the second century CE, Justin accused the Jews of removing texts that were important to Christians.[16] Although none of the texts he cited has been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and so it is impossible to check his particular examples, there are others, such as Deuteronomy 32.43, where the Masoretic Hebrew is shorter than the Qumran text, and the missing lines are the messianic proof text used in Hebrews 1.6: 'Let all God's angels worship him.'[17] So too, the variant in the great Isaiah scroll from Qumran, where one different letter reveals that the Virgin was called 'the Mother of the LORD'.[18] The sons of God, of whom the LORD was one, disappeared from Deuteronomy 32.8 and became instead the sons of Israel; and the Anointed One (Isa.52.14) lost one letter and became the disfigured one. There are many obvious examples of a post-Christian reaction and redaction.[19] It seems that there had been a similar process of reaction and redaction during the second temple period, and the reason for the earlier 'corrections' had been the Lady. Many unusual and difficult texts make sense again if they are read as the veiling of the Lady, whereas the later corrections were a reaction to the Christian claims for her Son.

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[12] Active during the second temple period and for a while after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE.

[13] S. Levin, *The Father of Joshua/Jesus*, Binghamton: SUNY Press, 1978, p.70, citing A. Geiger, *Urschrift und Uebersetzungen der Bibel*, Breslau: Julius Hainauer, 1857, pp.308–33, 384–5; and D. Barthélemy, 'Les tiqquné sopherim et la critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament', Supplements to Vetus Testamentum IX (1963), pp.258–304.

[14] Levin, p.81.

[15] Babylonian Talmud *Nedarim* 37b.

[16] Justin, *Trypho* 71.

[17] P. Skehan, 'A Fragment of the Song of Moses (Deut.32) from Qumran', Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, 136 (1954), pp.12–15.

[18] Reading *aleph* instead of *'ayin*, gives 'Ask a sign from the *Mother* of the LORD' rather than the MT 'ask a sign from the LORD …' Isa.7.11.

[19] See my book *The Great High Priest*, London: T&T Clark, 2003, pp.294–315.

The centrepiece of Josiah's purge was the removal of Asherah from the temple and her destruction (2 Kgs 23.4), which must correspond to the rejection of Wisdom/the Queen of Heaven. It is unlikely that two major female figures were removed from the temple. The removal and destruction of (the) Asherah is described in some detail: burned by the Kidron, beaten to dust and then scattered on common graves. The Lady's presence in other Hebrew texts was obscured in various ways. Why, for example is Isaiah 6.11-13 unreadable, a passage where so many words sound like Asherah, the main object of Josiah's purge? There are many places where the Hebrew text is opaque, in Isaiah and elsewhere, and this raises important questions.

Some of the scribal conventions for 'correcting' the text are well known – such as reading Adonai, my Lord, instead of pronouncing the name – and they did not change the meaning of the text. There are others, however, where the meaning of the text did change, and there was a pattern in the changes. It was done by reading the same letters with different vowels or making a different division of the letters, or even by changing the text itself. Sometimes they rearranged the letters, sometimes they substituted one letter for another, and not only in new copies of the texts. It seems that some scribes even 'corrected' existing texts. During the minor days of Passover and Tabernacles, for example, it was forbidden 'to correct a single letter even in the scroll of the Temple Court'.[20] Thus 'Late Jewish scholarship was never of a purely linguistic type; its linguistic memories were maintained within the context of religious and legal interpretation, and this in turn may have reacted upon the sense ascribed to words in the biblical texts.'[21]

This is why we now read that the people of Samaria had calves not in *byt 'l* Beth El, the house of God, but in *byt 'wn*, Beth Aven meaning the house of idolatry. The letters *byt 'wn* could also be pronounced Beth Ōn, which the Lxx transliterated and understood as the temple of the sun god (Hos.10.5). This 'correction' of the Hebrew text must have been made before the Lxx was translated, because it translated the 'corrected' Hebrew text. Solomon, we now read, built shrines for the 'abomination' of Moab and the 'abomination' of Ammon (1 Kgs 11.7), because the gods of other nations were too unclean to mention. Isaiah prophesied five cities in Egypt that would acknowledge the LORD (Isa.19.18). One would be called the City of the Sun, *'îr haḥeres*, or was it *'îr haheres*, City of Destruction? The Qumran Isaiah texts[22] have 'City of the Sun' as do Symmachus' Greek and the Vulgate; but the MT has 'City of Destruction'. Presumably the MT, fixed after 70 CE, reflects the view of those who did not recognise the temple in Egypt. The Targum knew both and so incorporated both possibilities, 'the

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[20] Mishnah *Moed Katan* 3.4.

[21] J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968, p.43.

[22] 1Q Isa[a], 4Q Isa[b].

house of the sun which is to be destroyed'. But why the 'city of the sun', and why should that name have attracted the attention of the correcting scribes?[23]

The Lxx has something completely different, and this introduces a third line of investigation. When the Hebrew texts were put into Greek (or later, into Aramaic), the translators, by their choice of words, revealed their own opinions and interpretations. One of Isaiah's five cities in Egypt would be called *polis 'asedek*, 'City of Righteousness', the name Isaiah gave to the restored Jerusalem (Isa.1.26). The translator must have thought that the restored Jerusalem would be in Egypt. Now a Jewish temple was built in the district of the City of the Sun soon after 170 BCE, and this community probably translated Isaiah into Greek. Onias, a Zadokite defeated in a dynastic struggle for the high priesthood in Jerusalem, fled to Egypt and the protection of Ptolemy, and there, according to Josephus, he was permitted to build 'a small town on the model of Jerusalem and a temple resembling ours'.[24] The translator of the Lxx, a Jew in Egypt, could have been expressing support for Onias the Zadokite when s/he translated Isaiah's prophecy of the City of the Sun as a prophecy of the City of Righteousness, the true Jerusalem. 'Righteousness' and the family name of the ousted priest, 'Zadok' were written in the same way, *ṣdq*.

Here we introduce the fourth line of investigation: memory preserved in customs and storytelling. According to the *Mishnah,* which was compiled about 200 CE but included much older material, the temple built by Onias and its priests had an ambiguous status. The temple in the City of the Sun was not fully accepted nor was it actually condemned. Any whole offering or Nazirite's hair offering vowed to that temple could be presented there or in Jerusalem, but any offering vowed to Jerusalem could not be offered in the temple of Onias. Priests who served in Onias' temple could not serve in Jerusalem as they were considered blemished priests. They could eat the holy food there, but not offer sacrifice. To justify this ruling, the Mishnah quoted the verse about the priests of the high places in the time of Josiah, who could not serve at the altar in Jerusalem but could eat the unleavened bread with their brethren (2 Kgs 23.9).[25] This implies that the priests in Egypt had a similar status to those who were ejected from the older shrines in the time of Josiah, and a higher status than those who returned from

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[23] See below, p.152.

[24] Josephus, *War* 1.33. In a later passage, he modified this statement and said that the temple built by Onias was different from the one in Jerusalem. It was a tower 60 cubits high, in a courtyard surrounded by a wall of baked brick, but with stone doorways. The altar was like the one in Jerusalem, but there was no standing menorah. Instead, he installed a hanging lamp, suspended by a golden chain, *War* 7.426-9. For an outline of these events and the problems with Josephus' text, see J. C. VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas. High Priests after the Exile*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004, pp.214–22.

[25] Mishnah *Menaḥoth* 13.10.

Babylon but could not prove their priestly descent (Ezra 2.62-63). *People remembered that the priests ousted in the time of Josiah were not idolaters or aliens*. Evidence for the effects of 'Josiah's reform' can thus be found in many places outside the biblical accounts, not only in the way that events in his time were a precedent for later rulings, but also in the ways that texts were altered in both the Hebrew and the Greek translations.

'The whole race of the chosen root shall be dispersed',[26] is Enoch's 'prediction' of the diaspora during the first temple period, and there are several examples of remote Hebraic communities who seem to have preserved a pre-Josianic form of religion. Best known must be the Rechabites, whose 'History' was widely known in the ancient Christian world and survives in many languages. It was translated from Hebrew into Greek and then into Syriac by Jacob, bishop of Edessa in the late sixth century.[27] The original story, however, was Jewish, and describes a pious group, 'the sons of Rechab', who left Jerusalem in the time of Josiah's son Jehoiakim. He had tried to make them 'obedient sons of his kingdom',[28] abandoning their ancient ways. When they refused, they were imprisoned and then set free by angels.[29] Thereafter called the Blessed Ones, they were taken to a paradise place where they lived with the angels and prayed for those left behind on earth. They still lived a mortal life, because angels came to make their graves, and then their souls – in the form of a body of light – were taken by the angels up to heaven. The location of their paradise place is not revealed, but their group survived for many centuries. A Rechabite came to help James, the leader of the Jerusalem Christians, when he was attacked in the temple,[30] and the Talmud records that the Rechabites were known as the *nozerim*, the 'diligent observers'.[31] Since the first Christians were also known as the Nazorenes (Acts 24.5, not Naz*a*renes, as usually translated), and the persecuted children of the woman clothed with the sun were 'those who keep the commandments of God' (Rev.12.17), there could be a link. In the mid-twelfth century, the Jewish traveller Benjamin of Tudela,[32] found a considerable number of 'Jews who are called Rechabites' living in Arabia, with their capital city at Tema.[33]

Now Rechab may well have been the name of their ancestor, but its usual meaning is 'chariot'. The sons of Rechab could also mean people

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[26] *1 Enoch* 93.8.

[27] According to the preface to a thirteenth century Syriac MS, see J. H. Charlesworth in OTP2, p.450.

[28] *History of the Rechabites* 10.2.

[29] These were probably temple priests, since the priests 'were' the angels, see my book *The Great High Priest*, London: T&T Clark, 2003, pp.103–45.

[30] Eusebius, *Church History* 2.23.

[31] Babylonian Talmud *Baba Bathra* 91b.

[32] Not the most reliable of sources!

[33] Jewish Encyclopedia, 'Rechabites'.

devoted to, or characterised by their association with, the chariot. They appear in the Old Testament as people committed to the desert lifestyle (Jer.35.6-10), supporting Jehu in his battle against the worship of Baal (2 Kgs 10.15, 23) but they also appear as scribes (1 Chron.2.55). Given the priestly allusions throughout the *History of the Rechabites*, this chariot would have been the chariot throne in the holy of holies, and they would have been servants of the holy of holies, a priestly group who were warriors like the high priest Phineas (Num.31.6-7) or those who composed the Qumran War Scroll. In the paradise place to which they escaped, time was not reckoned – a characteristic of the holy of holies. It was surrounded by an ocean, just as the throne in the holy of holies was surrounded by a great sea (Rev.4.6), and it was planted with flowers and luxuriant fruit trees (as was the temple, 1 Kgs.6.29-32). Sweet water flowed from the roots of the trees[34] (cf. Rev.22.1-2). The whole land was filled with light and was never dark (cf. Rev.21.23-25), and an all-enveloping cloud, which reached up to heaven, shielded them from sunlight. They wore garments of glory, invisible to the mortal eye, and were 'like Adam and Eve before they sinned'.[35] There was no pain or sickness, no weariness, anger or hateful thoughts, and they could hear the praises of the angels. This is like the new heaven and new earth described by John (Rev.21.1-5). When the monk Zosimus went to visit them, he was taken up into their land by two huge trees on the shore of the sea. The story has doubtless been embellished over the years, but the original home of the Blessed Ones was a temple place, where mortals lived with angels in an uncorrupted state. This sounds like the memory of a displaced temple community, with the sons of Rechab as devotees of the chariot throne, living like Adam and Eve in their garments of glory.

There were other memories of Jewish communities going to Arabia as the result of Josiah's purge. The Jerusalem Talmud, compiled by 400 CE but incorporating much older material, remembered that at the time of Josiah 80,000 young priests had gone over to Nebuchadnezzar, presumably when he moved into Judah in 597 BCE, and presumably because they hoped to regain their position in Jerusalem. They then went to live among the Ishmaelites, where they were denied hospitality and offered dry water skins. This was deemed fulfilment of Isaiah 21.13-14: 'The oracle concerning Arabia: "In the thickets of Arabia you will lodge"' which was said to mean 'a great burden is on Arabia, for those who were in the Forest of Lebanon (i.e. the temple complex, 1 Kgs 7.2) are now in the thickets of Arabia.'[36] Isaiah's oracle was addressed to the people of the land of Tema (Isa.21.14), where the Jews called Rechabites lived on for many centuries. As late

[34] *History* 11.4.
[35] *History* 7.2.
[36] Jerusalem Talmud *Ta'anit* 4.5.

as the fourth century CE – one thousand years after the event – people remembered that many priests had deserted to Nebuchadnezzar, and the most obvious conclusion would be that they were the priests displaced by Josiah's purges, who had good reason to fight against the new regime in Jerusalem. King Zedekiah himself, when Jeremiah advised him to surrender before Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians [the Chaldeans], said: 'I am afraid of the Jews who have deserted to the Chaldeans, lest I be handed over to them and they abuse me' (Jer.38.19).

These priests settled in Arabia and presumably kept the older faith that Josiah had purged. We should expect to find memories of the first temple there, and this migration of the older priesthood may explain why the dimensions of the Ka'abah are so very similar to Solomon's holy of holies: a cube of approximately 20 cubits (1 Kgs 6.20).[37] Late in the second temple period, there were special rules for the Jews in Arabia: Jewish women in Arabia wore veils,[38] and the tent of an Arab could be entered without contracting uncleanness.[39] There were Jews from Arabia in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts 2.11) who must have included descendents of those priests who took with them the older faith. According to the ninth century CE Persian historian Al-Baladhuri: 'When Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem ... some Israelites fled away to al-Hijaz and settled in Wadi-el-Kura, Taima' and Yathrib [Medina].'[40] The Israelites eventually dominated Medina. Inscriptions have been found at Dedan, which seem to mention both male and female Levites.[41] Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, lived in Tema from 553–543 BCE[42] and it was said that a Jewish healer cured him of an ulcer.[43] He established garrisons in several places in Arabia which included men from Palestine.[44]

Two texts found at Qumran associated Abraham with Arabia, something unknown in the Hebrew Bible, but assumed in the Qur'an. All his children, not just the heirs of Isaac, shared one faith. The *Genesis Apocryphon* describes how Abraham travelled all round the coast of Arabia, and *Jubilees* describes Abraham's last instructions to all his descendants: the children of Ishmael, the children of Isaac and the children of Keturah. All had to follow the way of the LORD, all had to circumcise their sons as a sign of

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[37] Assuming a cubit to be approximately 50cm, the Ka'abah is an asymmetrical cube-like shape, with exterior sides approx. 23 cubits, 20 cubits and 24 cubits.

[38] Mishnah *Shabbat* 6.6.

[39] Mishnah *Oholoth*18.10.

[40] Al-Baladhuri, Futuh al Buldan, (tr.) P. Hitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1916, pp.31–2.

[41] R. de Vaux, '"Lévites" Minéens et Lévites Israélites' in *Lex Tua Veritas. FS for H. Junker*, eds, H. Gross and F. Mussner, Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1961, pp.265–73.

[42] ANET 3rd edn/supplement 1969 pp.562–3.

[43] *The Prayer of Nabonidus*, 4Q242.

[44] D. J. Gadd, 'The Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus', Anatolian Studies VIII, 1958, pp.35–92, pp.85–7, suggesting settlements in Tema, Dedan and Yathrib.

the covenant, all had to keep themselves from fornication and impurity and to shun the worship of idols.[45] These were memories of how things were in the time of Abraham, and this may not have been as long ago as the present sequence in the Hebrew Bible would lead us to believe. The religion of Abraham was still practised in the seventh century BCE, and this is what Josiah purged.[46] The memories of Abraham may not have been historically accurate – who had any means of checking? – but this is what people believed and *had reason to recount at the end of the second temple era*. Enoch's 'apostate generation' who compiled the stories of Abraham in the Hebrew Scriptures had good reason not to mention Abraham's travels in Arabia, or the existence of ousted priests there.

There may be further evidence for the older religion in the book of Job, since Jewish communities in Arabia are a possible context for the book. As with many biblical texts, there are no certain ways to date it, but what makes Job unique is its setting. An appendix to the LXX says Job lived in the land of Uş, on the borders of Edom and Arabia (Job 42.17). Job knew the caravans of Tema and Sheba (Job 6.19). He is presented as living in the time of the patriarchs: Job's wealth was similar to Isaac's (Job 1.3; Gen.26.13-14), and the currency was the *q*^{e}*śîṭah*, which was also used by Jacob (Job 42.11; Gen.33.19; Jos.24.32). Neither the narrative framework nor the poetic dialogues in Job mention anything of the sacred history – there is no Moses, no Exodus, no Abraham. Job's friends knew about Adam (Job 15.7) and about the fallen angels (Job 4.18). The book does not assume monotheism,[47] and its language is different from 'Old Testament' Hebrew, with many words identified as from Aramaic or Arabic. Maybe it was the Hebrew spoken in the land of Uş.

The poetic dialogues in Job do not use the name Yahweh, and that is significant for our enquiry. With one exception, in a line which some think was a proverb inserted later (Job 12.9), the names for God are El, Shaddai, and Eloah. El and Shaddai are names known from the stories of the patriarchs, and so we should expect them if Job was set in that era. The compiler of the Pentateuch had Moses learn about the patriarchs' names for God from the LORD himself: 'I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as El Shaddai, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them' (Exod.6.3, my translation). We should not expect the name Yahweh in the time of the patriarchs.

The name Eloah, however, raises interesting questions. It looks suspiciously like a feminine form of El, God, and unravelling the text problems of just one passage shows that the quest for Eloah is complex and involves several of our paths of investigation: an implied memory of

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[45] *Jubilees* 20.1-13.

[46] See below, pp.77–86.

[47] We shall return to this in detail later.

the role of the king that does not appear in the MT, an example of the community memory that knew a different context for a Wisdom text; and a memory of the Lady. The results are consistent. Eloah is found 42 times in Job – all through the dialogues between Job and the three friends. In later Hebrew texts the word meant a heathen god (e.g. 2 Chron.32.15), but in earlier material it was the name for a Hebrew deity (Deut.32.15, 17). 'Who is Eloah but the LORD?' asked the Psalmist, 'and who is the Rock except our God?' (Ps.18.32). Isaiah, proclaiming the new monotheism of the exile, had the LORD ask the same question: 'Is there Eloah apart from me? And there is no Rock – I do not know one' (Isa.44.8b, my translation). Both these suggest a polemical context, implying that someone had thought that Eloah was different from the LORD. There is reason to believe that the original significance of Eloah was lost when the divine names were realigned after the work of Josiah, when the LORD was identified with El Shaddai and perhaps also with Eloah.

One of the major changes, as we shall see, was effected by editing/censoring the older Wisdom writings originally associated with the Lady and her messengers/angels.[48] A good example would be Proverbs 30.1-4, which appears in the Lxx in a different place, after a version of Proverbs 24.22 that is much longer than the MT. The lines in the Lxx are not attributed to Agur son of Jakeh, as they are in the MT, but *refer to the teaching of the king*, whose tongue does not lie but is like a sword not made for the flesh. In the following passage from the MT, the Lxx Proverbs 24.25-26 is in italics, for comparison.

1.The man says to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal.

This is opaque in the MT and not in the Lxx. The original was probably 'I have not come to God, I have not come to God and endured [his presence]', implying that the speaker has not entered the holy of holies and acquired Wisdom.[49]

2.Surely I am too stupid to be a man,
For I am the most foolish of all men
I have not the understanding of a man.
And the practical wisdom of men is not in me.
3.I have not learned Wisdom,
God has taught me wisdom,
Nor have I knowledge of the Holy One. [Hebrew is literally 'holy ones']
And I have learned the knowledge of the holy ones.

[48] See p.176.
[49] See below, pp.144–5.

From this point, the Lxx 24.27-28 is virtually the same as MT 30.4-5.

> 4.Who has ascended to heaven and come down?
> Who has gathered the wind in his fists? [*upper garment*]
> Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment?
> Who has established all the ends of the earth? [*ruled the heights of the earth*]
> What is his name and what is his son's name? [sons' name]
> Surely you know! [not in Lxx]
> 5. Every word of God, *'elôah*, proves true, [literally, is refined by fire]
> He is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

In Hebrew, the passage is about someone who is *ba'ar*, stupid, used elsewhere as a technical term for one without wisdom (e.g. Pss.73.22; 92.6; 94.8; Prov.12.1) or for those who proudly claim wisdom for themselves (e.g. Jer.10.8, 14, 21). It seems that the original meaning of the text has been preserved by the Lxx, which still has the parallelism characteristic of Hebrew poetry. It was about heavenly wisdom and the king who possessed it. The difference between the Hebrew and the Greek of v.3b came about through exchanging two letters: the original had *'l*, God, rather than *l'*, not, and so the line was: 'God has taught me', rather than 'I have not learned'. The correcting scribes thus obscured and denied the source of wisdom. By detaching the text from its original royal context, which has been preserved by the Lxx, the MT has only the mysterious 'Agur son of Jakeh' as the source of this material, and the royal wisdom tradition has been obscured.

The question then becomes: who made the changes and when? Something similar to this section of the Lxx is found in the Wisdom of Solomon, which was written in Egypt. 'Solomon' prayed for Wisdom to be sent from the heavenly throne to guide him so that he could judge his people justly (Wis.9.9-18), and Lxx Proverbs 24, translated in Egypt, has preserved a similar royal context for the sayings which MT attributes to 'Agur son of Jakeh'. There are several reasons why this passage should have been relocated in MT as an appendix to Proverbs, and assigned to an apparently foreign source.

First, this ascent to heaven to receive Wisdom was exactly what Deuteronomy dismissed when offering the Law of Moses as a substitute:

> This commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that you should say, 'Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say 'Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it. (Deut.30.11-14)

Second, Deuteronomy was wary of the secret things; the wisdom of the chosen people was to obey the commandments, and, by implication, to leave the secret things with God (Deut.4.6; 29.29). Third, the theme of the D histories was the wickedness of the kings in Jerusalem; only those who ruled in accordance with the ways of Deuteronomy were deemed good. The wicked kings could never have been the channel of divine wisdom, described as the words of Eloah. 'All the speech of Eloah is refined by fire; it is a shield to all who seek refuge in it' (Prov.30.5). The same image is found in Psalm 18.30-31//2 Samuel 22.31-32, again with the name Eloah, which gives a cluster of divine names: 'The *El*, his way is perfect, the word of *Yahweh* is true. He/it is a shield to all who seek refuge. For who is *Eloah* but *Yahweh*, And who is *ṣûr*, Rock, but our *'elohîm*?' (Ps.18.30-31, my translation).[50]

Eloah, it seems, was a name from the earlier period, associated with wisdom and with the king who ascended to heaven to learn the secrets of the creation. This would explain why the name appears so often in Job, but why did it become opaque? Even if the question cannot be answered it can be asked, along with another: 'Why should Eloah be used in this book, set in "Arabia" in the time of the patriarchs?' It has been explained as conscious archaising, but then why should the writer associate that divine name with 'Arabia' and the period of the patriarchs? The questions in the book of Job – the reason for suffering and responsibility for sin – are those of the exile and the early second temple period, but the compiler or editor of the reworked ancient tale must have known that in the era of the patriarchs, El, Shaddai and Eloah were the names for the deity or deities of his people, just as he knew that the currency was the *qeśîtah*. Whatever the date of the book of Job, it shows that the older ways and names were not forgotten.

Material such as the book of Job, which does not fit the usual version of the Old Testament story, belongs in the other story *as told by the victims of Josiah's actions*. This is one of the other voices who regarded the second temple as apostate and thus had a point of view very different from those who compiled both the Pentateuch and the histories of Jerusalem. Josiah's 'reform' affected not only the religion of Jerusalem and Judah in his time, but also the way that past history was recorded. Josiah's 'reform' shaped the future and reshaped the past, which means that anyone using only the Hebrew Scriptures as their source has problems fitting the other evidence into the grid.

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[50] All this is complicated by the form of the third person pronoun, which in many older texts had a common written form, h', the gender being apparent only in the way the word was spoken, see F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, [1907] 1962, p.215.

The Other Communities

The impact of the purges and the flight of refugees from both Josiah and from the Babylonian conquest might explain how the pre-Josian religion survived in more distant places. There was a Jewish settlement in Egypt, on an island in the Nile at Elephantine [also known as Yeb], 'an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt' (Isa.19.19). Jewish Aramaic documents were found there from 1893 onwards, affording a glimpse of life in that remote Jewish community. Pharaoh Psammetichus II (593–588 BCE) had put a garrison there, including men from Judah, to defend the southern part of Egypt against the Ethiopians.[51] The date suggests that the men from Judah were refugees from the worsening situation there after the Babylonian invasion, or even after the purges of Josiah.[52] They called themselves *yhwdy'*, Jews, and they had their own temple by 525 BCE. This shows that they did not know, or accept, the one temple ruling of Deuteronomy that Josiah tried to impose (Deut.12.1-14; 2 Kgs 23.8-9). Their leader may have been a priest; there is no evidence either way, but his assistants were described as priests, although the names Aaron and Levite do not occur. The papyri show a way of life untouched by the Deuteronomists: five deities are named: Yahu, Anatyahu, Anatbethel, Herembethel and Ishumbethel – although some of these could be alternative names for the same deities. None of these is an Egyptian name, and *Anatyahu and Anatbethel are female.* This was not local syncretism; the names had come from Judah with the refugees and presumably are evidence of the religion they brought with them, the religion of Jerusalem before Josiah's purge.

An early edition of these texts realised their importance for the history of religion in Judah and Jerusalem: 'The interest of documents such as these is that they are contemporary with the events to which they relate. They present therefore a trustworthy picture of their surroundings, not distorted by lapse of time, *nor obscured by textual corruption*.' 'These texts lead to the conclusion that the Pentateuch, both in its historical and legal aspects, was unknown in the fifth century to the Jews of Elephantine, and it is probable that *the populace in Judaea in the seventh century was no better informed*.' 'All [the later development that we recognise as Judaism] is a natural growth of the system born under Ezra: it could not have grown out of a religious system such as that of the colonists of Elephantine.'[53]

In 411 BCE, the temple at Elephantine was burned and looted by the local Egyptians who objected to the blood sacrifices. They worshipped a ram god, and so the sacrifices required for Passover would have been abhorrent

[51] *Letter of Aristeas* 13; Herodotus, *Histories* 2.30.
[52] A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century BCE*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923, p.xxii, my emphases.
[53] Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri,* pp.xiv, xxviii, my emphases.

to them. When the Jews received permission to rebuild the temple, they were allowed to offer only meal and incense as was formerly done. There is no mention of animal sacrifice.[54] Another papyrus, somewhat damaged, is a letter from five men with Jewish names requesting the restoration of incense, meal offerings and drink offerings, if sheep, oxen and goats are not sacrificed and burnt there.[55] One possible reconstruction of the religious history of the colony would be that they had provoked local anger when they began animal sacrifice, but had always offered grain, incense and libations. This was exactly how the refugees from Judah described the worship of the Queen of Heaven (Jer.44.19).

There was a temple for the Queen of Heaven on the east bank of the Nile opposite the island of Yeb, at Syene (now Aswan). This has proved to be rather embarrassing for those who like to retain a traditional view of Hebrew religion, and so they maintain that there was a distinction between 'Aramaeans of Syene', who had temples to *Bethel* and *Malkut Sh^{e}mayin* [the Queen of Heaven], and the Jews on the local island.[56] The papyri themselves show there was no such distinction: Qoniah b. Zadok is an 'Aramaean of Syene' in one text, and 'a Jew' in another; Mahseiah b. Yedoniah is an Aramaean of Syene in one place and 'a Jew of the fortress of Yeb' in another.[57] Just like the refugees who disputed with Jeremiah, these Jews had a temple for the Queen of Heaven. Isaiah's enigmatic prophecy about the five cities in Egypt worshipping the LORD of Hosts, one of which would be called the City of the Sun, could have been a reference to the temple at Yeb. It was only the much later translator of the LXX who implied that it was the north Egyptian city of Leontopolis. Yeb would have been a place of special significance for anyone with an interest in the sun, since it was only some 50 miles north of the Tropic of Cancer where the sun was overhead at the summer solstice.

To the south of Yeb in Ethiopia is the ancient culture of the Qemant, described by anthropologists as a 'pagan-Hebraic peasantry'. They observe the Old Testament food laws, consider the same animals clean and unclean, and kill them such that no blood is consumed. They do not eat any animal that has died of natural causes, nor do they cook meat with milk (cf. Exod.23.19). They observe Sabbath from Friday dusk to Saturday dusk and do not light fires (cf. Exod.35.1-3). They worship only one God, a sky God in human form, known as Adara or Yeadara, meaning 'my Adera', but his personal name is Mezgana. Now Adera is similar to the Hebrew word *'addîr* meaning 'mighty or glorious' (e.g.

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[54] Papyrus 32.
[55] Papyrus 33.
[56] Thus B. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968, pp.33, 165.
[57] Qoniah in papyri 5.2 and 6.8; Mahseiah in papyri 5.2 and 6.3.

Ps.76.4 'more majestic than the everlasting mountains' or Ps.93.4 'the LORD is mighty'); and Mezgana might be related to the Hebrew *zyg*, brightness. The Falasha, who speak the same language as the Qemant and are recognised as Jews, give Adara two names: Elohe and Adonay, clearly the same as the Hebrew *'elohîm*, God and *'adonay*, LORD. The Qemant also acknowledge a pantheon of heavenly beings who act as mediators. The mediator is a *qedus*, a holy one or angel, and the *qedus* may formerly have been a human being. The chief mediators are seven angels: Mezgani, Jakaranti, Kiberwa, Aderaiki, Kiddisti, Shemani and Anzatatera, which means that Mezgani is one of the seven great angels. The evil angel is Saytan, a black figure who causes thunder and lightning, and can take human or animal form.

There is sufficient similarity in the names alone to establish that the Qemant are 'Hebraic'. What is important for reconstructing the religion before Josiah's purges is that they seem to have kept pre-Deuteronomic ways. They know of Abraham and use his name in blessings, they know of Adam, the first person created by Mezgana. Moses is not important to them and is proverbial as a false witness. They pray facing east, and the Great Lady of the high priest's court is his mother. They set up stone pillars and anoint them, and they worship in sacred groves or at high places where there is a great tree or a rock. The holy men pray to Adara in the groves, which are the meeting place of heaven and earth, and some holy men, they say, made contact with God and were taken up and vanished. This is very like some Jewish traditions: Enoch and Elijah were taken up to heaven and left no grave. Jesus too. Similar too is the Qemant belief about the day of judgement, which will occur on a Sabbath, i.e. at the end of the sixth day. The early Christians called this Sabbath the millennium, the day that lasted a thousand years and was the time of the Kingdom on earth. The Qemant believed that the LORD would return riding a horse, just as in Revelation 19.6-11.

There are few reports about the Qemant. One, written by the anthropologist F. C. Gamst, has a frustrating lack of detail about their religious practices.[58] Anthropologists ask anthropologists' questions, and do not always have the expertise to recognise the most significant information about patterns of religious practice. Gamst noted that the Qemant kept their religious beliefs and practices secret, and maintained an archaic socio-cultural system.[59] Their 'world outlook stresses the group's uniqueness and makes mandatory social separation from other peoples'. The important

[58] F. C. Gamst, *The Qemant. A Pagan Hebraic Peasantry of Ethiopia*. Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology, New York: Holt Rinehart Winston, 1969.
[59] Gamst, p.29.

observation 'Certain individual trees and animals *such as serpents* were worshipped' appears with no further comment or detail.[60] There may have been other significant details that were not recorded. Graham Hancock, writing with a journalist's eye, described the contemporary Qemant in his book *The Sign and the Seal*. He visited one of their sacred trees: 'Inside the walled enclosure that surrounded [the massive ancient acacia tree] laid out upon the ground were various offerings ... Every branch of the tree to a height of about six feet off the ground had been festooned with strips of vari-coloured cloth.' He reported a conversation with their Wambar, their high priest: 'Our religion has become a thing of the past. Almost nobody practises it today.' The Qemant are now mainly Christians.[61]

Another group who have now abandoned most of their ancient ways and become Christian are the Chiang Min, a group in the border area between China and Tibet. They were 'discovered' in 1916 by the Rev. T. Torrance, a missionary, and he described their 'Israelite' way of life and beliefs.[62] He wondered whether they might have been the people, deported by the Assyrians, who decided to travel even further east, 'a journey of a year and a half' (2 Esd.13.40-45). They went to a deserted land, so that they 'might keep their statues which they had not kept in their own land'. Since 2 Esdras was compiled at the end of the second temple era, this is yet another memory of scattered people, this time travelling a long way to the east, whether or not these people became the Chiang.

The missionary's son was Prof. T. F. Torrance, who wrote a preface to the 1988 reprint of his father's book:

> My father was deeply impressed with the Chiang way of life and with their monotheistic religion ... But it was the biblical nature of their faith and worship, and the detailed correspondence between their religious observances and the teaching of the Old Testament that captivated him ... I have vivid recollections of my own experience among the Chiang, when as a boy of twelve or thirteen years I used to accompany my father on his missionary journeys ... In 1925 I had the privilege of being present ... when a venerable Chiang priest revealed to my father for the first time the full rites of the day of atonement in the Chiang liturgical year. When my father read to him the sixteenth chapter of the Book of Leviticus, the priest leapt off his seat in excitement, exclaiming that these were the lost Chiang Scriptures.

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[60] Gamst, p.30, my emphases. The serpent is important in the quest for the Lady, see below, p.114.

[61] G. Hancock, *The Sign and the Seal. A Quest for the Lost Ark of the Covenant*, London: Heinemann, 1992, pp.43, 247.

[62] T. Torrance, *China's First Missionaries. Ancient Israelites*. Printed privately 1937 and reprinted Chicago: Daniel Shaw, 1988.

The Chiang Min held to an ancient monotheism, and their religious observances were those of the Old Testament. They had no representation of God, but various symbols of his presence: a sheet of white paper, for example, or a conical piece of unhewn white rock. They called their faith 'the white religion', and they worshipped in a sacred grove or on a mountain, a high place where only men were present. There was an altar of unhewn stones, or of earth covered with unhewn stones, and behind the altar grew the sacred tree. Between the altar and the tree, or on the altar, they set the white stone. Families would worship on the flat roof of their home, constructing their own grove by placing branches into perforated stone slabs and setting the white stone in front of them. A white outline of a stylised tree – not unlike a menorah in shape – was often painted on the outside wall of a house.

God came to his people in the grove by descending through the tree, very like the scene in *2 Enoch* where the LORD rests at the tree of life when he goes into paradise.[63] The one who descended through the tree was known as Abba Malach, Abba meaning 'father' but the Chiang had lost the meaning of Malach. Torrance suggested that it was the Hebrew *mal'āk*, angel, and that this name had originally been 'Father Angel', evidence of a Semitic name in China. Their new year ceremony began with processions to the grove, where the sacred white scroll was placed in front of the white stone, and a cake of unleavened bread and a jar of wine were set on the altar. The sacred rod, in the form of a snake twisted round a pole, head downwards, was set up. The rod was also called Abba Malach, and it was the symbol of the presence of God.

Prof. T. F. Torrance concluded:

> I am convinced on [my father's] main thesis, that the origins of the Chiang and their religion lie deep in antiquity, in the pre-history of ancient Israel ... What I find particularly startling, however, is that the religious observances of the Chiang seem to derive from a period in Israel's history before Moses and certainly *before the centralisation of the cult in Jerusalem had been carried out, when high place worship was still prevalent.*[64]

If, as we now suspect, the Moses-Exodus traditions came to prominence in the time of Josiah, the practices of the Chiang may well have their roots in the older religion, before Josiah destroyed the high places and pillars and burned Asherah, the sacred tree.

The sons of Rechab and the other priests in Arabia, the community at Yeb in Egypt, the Qemant in Ethiopia, and the Chiang in western China all

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[63] *2 Enoch* 8.3.

[64] Torrance, p.vii, my emphases.

seem to have their roots in the religion of Judah before Josiah. The people in Yeb knew female deities, the Qemant had groves and sacred trees through which their holy men ascended to become angels, and the Chiang had groves and sacred trees through which their guardian angel came to them. Communities far away or long ago provide very little evidence, but such as they do offer is a remarkable glimpse of the nature and extent of the first temple diaspora. There are only hints of this in the Hebrew Scriptures: the cities of Egypt where the LORD would be worshipped, the altar in the midst of the land and the pillar in the far south (Isa.19.18-19); the book of Job apparently set in Arabia; the references to the LORD's dispersed people in Ethiopia bringing offerings (Zeph.3.10) or serving in Jerusalem (Jer.38.7). Those who knew the LORD included people from Babylon, Philistia, Tyre and Ethiopia (Ps.87.4), and those who compiled the scroll of Isaiah put an oracle of ingathering after the restoration of the Branch of Jesse: the LORD would gather in his people from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Ethiopia, Elam, Shinar and Hamath (Isa.11.11). The faith of those dispersed from the first temple was the faith that Josiah purged.

The Other History

What Josiah promoted was the Moses tradition as set out in Deuteronomy. This is why the summaries of history in the Hebrew Scriptures – Exodus, Deuteronomy and the Psalms – are very different from the Enochic *Apocalypse of Weeks*. The biblical accounts emphasise Moses and the Exodus but do not mention Sinai, whereas the *Apocalypse of Weeks* does not mention the time in Egypt, Moses and the Exodus, but tells how the Law was given with visions of angels – 'holy and righteous ones'.[65] The 'biblical' history appears in Exodus 15, an old poem telling how the people left Egypt, how their enemies were terrified, and how the LORD planted them safely in his mountain sanctuary. No Sinai. Deuteronomy 6.20-24, the story to be told at Passover, describes the Exodus and entering the land. No Sinai. Deuteronomy 26.5-9, the recital at harvest, describes the journey to Egypt, the Exodus and the gift of the land. No Sinai. Joshua's speech at Shechem is similar: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Exodus, Balak, Balaam, Jericho, but no mention of Sinai (Josh.24.2-13). When Samuel reminded the people of their history, he did not mention Sinai (1 Sam.12.6-13). Psalm 136 sings of the wonders of the LORD, how he brought his people from Egypt, dividing the Red Sea and leading them to triumph over the desert kings, before giving them the land as their heritage. Psalms 78, 105 and 135 are similar; none mentions Sinai.

The *Apocalypse of Weeks* tells the other story: the history without

[65] *1 Enoch* 93.6.

Moses and the Exodus, and this is particularly striking when one recalls that Yahweh was defined and identified as the God of the Exodus at the beginning of the ten commandments: 'I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage ...' (Exod.20.2; Deut.5.6); and the chosen people, according the Deuteronomy, were defined as those brought out of Egypt, thus distinguishing them from those who worshipped the host of heaven (Deut.4.19). The implication is that the Moses-Exodus saga was late on the scene. The first summary of the sacred history that includes both Moses-Exodus and Sinai is the prayer of Ezra (Neh.9.13-14), which reflects the situation in the early years of the second temple, and presumably the time when the Pentateuch had been compiled so as to include the story of Sinai. It may be that Moses was not the original hero of Sinai.

The non-biblical version of the history of Jerusalem is also found in the *Damascus Document*. Fragments of this text have been found at Qumran, and a more complete form was found in a Cairo synagogue at the end of the nineteenth century. It was the work of ousted priests, or rather, of those who considered themselves the true heirs of Zadok.[66] These faithful priests wrote of the age of wrath that had befallen Jerusalem, the time when God hid his face from his sanctuary. The only 'date' says that the community who wrote the text originated 'in the age of wrath, 390 years after [God] had given [Jerusalem] into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar ...'.[67] It does not say that the age of wrath *began* with Nebuchadnezzar, nor does it say that the exile in Babylon had ended and the people returned. Perhaps it had been 'reforms' – not just the work of Josiah but of some earlier kings also – that gave Jerusalem into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Their action, their changes in the temple, had been the cause of the age of wrath. The *Damascus Document* knew that people presently living in Jerusalem, the second temple community, were not the chosen ones, and that their time was limited.[68]

Another section in *1 Enoch*, known as the *Dream Visions* [or *the Animal Apocalypse,* because it is told as an animal fable], also tells the non-biblical history. Nothing is clear, nothing is dated, but recent commentary assumes this text has to fit the Old Testament accounts, even though the Enoch tradition as a whole represents the 'other voices'. The *Dream Visions* seem to be telling the story of Jerusalem and Judah, describing how the people abandoned the house of the LORD and his tower, their code for the temple. 'Their eyes became blinded'.[69] This passage is usually read as an account of the northern kingdom breaking away from Jerusalem after the death of Solomon, but it could also be read as a description of wholesale apostasy in Jerusalem and Judah. There is no distinct description of the destruction of

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[66] *The Damascus Document*, CD IV.
[67] CD I.
[68] CD II.
[69] *1 Enoch* 89.54.

the northern kingdom followed by the destruction of the southern kingdom, as is noted: 'The author combines the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom in the 8th century BCE and the Babylonian conquest of the south in the 6th into one act of abandonment by the LORD of the sheep.'[70] Perhaps the *Dream Visions* was not combining the two events, but describing something other than the biblical version of the story. There had been just one act when the LORD abandoned Jerusalem, long before the conquest by the Babylonians. Reading without presuppositions, it seems that the LORD abandoned Jerusalem after the time of Elijah (about 860 BCE). Other prophets were sent, but in vain, and then 'they forsook the house of the LORD and his tower [i.e. temple] … and their eyes were blinded'. Disasters followed until 'those sheep invited that slaughter and betrayed His place', perhaps a reference to Ahaz inviting the king of Assyria to help him against the northern kingdoms (2 Kgs 16.7); or to Hezekiah's welcome for Merodach-baladan, who was rebelling against Assyria (Kgs 20.12-19). At that point, *in the time of Isaiah*, the LORD forsook 'their house and their tower' and gave them into the hands of foreign rulers, described as wild animals.[71]

If we suppose that the rebellion against the LORD which the *Damascus Document* described as 'the age of wrath' had already begun in the time of Isaiah, what else could be explained? There must have been some substance to the words of the Assyrian envoy when he taunted Hezekiah's courtiers: 'If you say to me, "We rely on the LORD our God", is it not he whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, "You shall worship before this altar"?' (2 Kgs 18.22). The work of Hezekiah was presented by the D writer, however, as a great reform (2 Kgs 18.3-6). The curious story of Hezekiah's sickness and Isaiah's treating his boil shows that Isaiah had originally regarded Hezekiah as a sinner who deserved to die, but later changed his mind (Isa.38.1-6).[72] The entire Isaiah corpus was compiled to emphasise Jerusalem's rebellion, opening with the words: 'Sons have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me' (Isa.1.2). It is always assumed that the people of Isaiah's time had rebelled against the Moses religion, but there is no evidence that they even knew it. Isaiah 1–39 reads like a chronicle of the age of wrath. What could have prompted Isaiah's reaction to his temple vision: 'Woe is me, for I kept silent' (Isa.6.5)? We shall return to Isaiah to ask about his silence, to ask why he did not mention Moses and the Exodus, why he used the title 'The Holy One', and why he had so much in common with the later Enoch texts.

The Enochic *Dream Visions* do not mention what the D writer presented as the 'reforms' of the temple. The tower was built for the LORD of the sheep,

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[70] D. Olson, *Enoch. A New Translation*, North Richland Hills: Bibal Press, 2004, p.200.

[71] *1 Enoch* 89.51-6.

[72] See my article 'Hezekiah's Boil' in Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 95 (2001), pp.31–42.

but the sheep lost their sight, abandoned the LORD and his tower, and went astray. *Hezekiah's reform of the temple and Josiah's reform of the temple are not mentioned.* This could be just omission, or it could be that 'Enoch' did not regard these actions as reforms, but rather as further evidence of the blindness that had afflicted the sheep. In other words, what we have been taught to regard as 'reforms' were the rebellions that prompted the age of wrath. The LORD abandoned them to various enemies, described as lions, tigers, wolves, hyenas, foxes – unclean animals. Eventually the LORD gave the sheep over to 70 shepherds, and appointed a guardian angel to record what the shepherds did. This Enochic style is exactly how the biblical prophets described their own times, but it usually passes without comment. 'Assyria, rod of my anger ... against a godless nation I send him ...' (Isa.10.5-6) – the LORD handed over his people to foreign rulers. 'All you beasts of the field, come to devour ...' (Isa.56.9) – the enemies were described as animals. 'Shepherds with their flocks shall come against [Jerusalem]' (Jer.6.3); these must have been the foreign shepherds and their armies. There are many examples. Even if the history in the *Dream Visions* was drawing on these images in the prophets and was not an independent witness to this way of thinking, the *Dream Visions* do put the otherwise isolated Old Testament imagery into a coherent context.

The age of wrath began before the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and the *Apocalypse of Weeks* says it was caused by abandoning Wisdom. Too much weight cannot be put on the order of events in this stylised account, but the sixth week does cover the whole of the first temple period. During this period, the people in the temple abandoned Wisdom and became blind before 'the man' ascended. This man could be Elijah, but more likely it is Isaiah, and Isaiah repenting of his silence about recent events would explain those strange words in his call vision. Whether the ascending man was Elijah or Isaiah, if the people of the temple abandoned Wisdom *before* this ascent, this was long before Josiah.

The Other Wisdom Books

According to both the Enoch histories – the *Apocalypse of Weeks* and the *Dream Visions* – those who returned to rebuild the temple were apostates and their worship was impure. Thus the age of wrath did not end. These 'apostates' not only rebuilt the temple; *they also compiled and transmitted the texts that became the Hebrew Scriptures, and their spiritual heirs determined the Hebrew canon after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE.* This is preserved in the story of Ezra restoring the scriptures after the destruction of the first temple, but the text clearly intends this as a description of what happened after the destruction in 70 CE. Ezra dictated 94 books, but was told to restore only 24 of them to his people, both worthy and unworthy, and to reserve the remaining 70 books for 'the wise' (2 Esd.14.45-47). Whoever

recorded this story in this form was saying, beyond any doubt *that the 24 books of the Hebrew canon were the less important texts, and that 'Ezra', the leader of the apostates, was the reason that the more important books had been withdrawn.* The withdrawn books were wisdom texts.

There were many possible books, and yet only 24 became Scripture. The others were not just set aside; they were firmly forbidden. Rabbi Akiba, teaching some 50 years after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, said that anyone who read the excluded books had no part in the world to come.[73] The context of this teaching was the second Jewish revolt against Rome, but also the decision about the Hebrew canon. Since the non-canonical Jewish books surviving from that period[74] have been preserved by Christian scribes, R. Akiba's firm prohibition must have concerned the distinction between Jews and Christians. A few years later, Justin was claiming that the Jews had even altered their Hebrew texts in order to remove material important to Christian claims,[75] and this 'altered' text is the one now used for translations of the Old Testament. *The implications of this for reconstructing the antecedents of Christianity cannot be too strongly emphasised.*

One of the excluded books could well have been 2 Esdras itself, which describes how the books were excluded. This is a Jewish text, but expanded with a Christian introduction and appendix (2 Esd.1–2, 15–16). The core of the original was attributed to Salathiel [that is Shealtiel, Mt.1.12], who was the grandson of King Josiah and the father of Zerubbabel who returned from Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem (Ezra 3.2; 5.2). In 2 Esdras, Salathiel was identified as Ezra (2 Esd.3.1), and the whole book then presented as a series of revelations to Ezra, the grandson of Josiah. Now Salathiel/Shealtiel is not one of the well known characters in the story of the exile and restoration; he is just a name in the genealogy of the royal house, and yet a series of revelations was attributed to him, and another series would later be attributed to his son Zerubbabel.[76] Why? Apocalypses were not attributed at random, but rather 'in keeping with the conventions of the apocalypse, which require a seer from the biblical past whose career often contributes to the message of the apocalypse …'.[77] Why, then, Shealtiel, Zerubbabel and Ezra?

The original Ezra, presented as a priest and a scribe (Ezra 7.11), achieved the status of priest by being grafted into the genealogy of the Aaronite high priests. He took the place of Jehozadak, father of the Joshua who returned with the first group from Babylon. In the Chronicler's high priestly genealogy (1 Chron.6.14) Jehozadak is the son of Seraiah, but in the

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[73] Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 10.1.
[74] Apart from the Dead Sea Scrolls.
[75] *Trypho* 71.
[76] *Sefer Zerubbabel*, written early in the seventh century CE.
[77] M. Himmelfarb, 'Sefer Zerubbabel' in *Rabbinic Fantasies*, eds D. Stern and M. J. Mirsky, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, pp.67–90, p.68.

genealogy in Ezra 7.1-5, it is Ezra who is the son of Seraiah. Thus a history was constructed such that Ezra was father(s) of both the founders of the second temple: he replaced Shealtiel, the father of Zerubbabel the Davidic prince, and he also replaced Jehozadak, the father of Joshua the high priest. This is a remarkable piece of rewriting. Ezra was also the first leader of 'the men of the great synagogue', the body of teachers who returned from Babylon, and whose successors shaped Judaism until about 200 BCE.[78] In other words, Ezra was presented as the figurehead of the second temple. He was the leader of those whom the Enoch tradition described as the impure apostates.

In 2 Esdras, Ezra was presented as a new Moses (2 Esd.14.1-6): the LORD spoke to him from a bush, and revealed to him secret things as well as teachings for all the people. He was inspired to dictate to his five scribes all the holy books, implying that the originals had been lost and had to be restored after the destruction of the temple. Ezra dictated 94 books, but restored only 24 of them to his people (2 Esd.14.45-47). The story of 'Ezra' restoring [rewriting?] and limiting the scriptures may preserve a memory of what actually happened at the beginning of the second temple period. In its present setting, it is most likely to be a thinly-veiled account of how the Hebrew canon was fixed at the end of the first century CE, showing that there were many more ancient holy books available to the first Christians than the present Hebrew Bible. The criterion for acceptance and exclusion is not known, but the account in 2 Esdras says that the books to be hidden away were books of *understanding, wisdom and knowledge*. 'Seventy books' of understanding, wisdom and knowledge suggests an extensive body of literature that was to be studied no more by the Jews. The Christians, however, preserved many of these books – they may originally have kept them all – and they kept the story of how they were excluded and by whom.

The Apocalypse attributed to Salathiel's son Zerubbabel, the *Book of Zerubbabel*,[79] seems to reflect conditions in the early seventh century CE. 'Zerubbabel' predicts that the Jews will soon repossess Jerusalem, that Hephzibah, the mother of the Messiah will defeat their enemies with her almond rod, and then drive out Armilus, the wicked son of Belial and a beautiful statue. This is widely recognised as a description of the conflict between Christians and Jews in Palestine in the seventh century CE, represented as *a struggle between two women for the possession of Jerusalem*: Hephzibah and the beautiful statue, clearly Mary. The son of the beautiful statue had planted Asheroth – presumably crosses – all over the land.[80] As

[78] See H. Danby, *The Mishnah*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, p.446, on Mishnah *Aboth* 1.1.
[79] English translation M. Himmelfarb, 'Sefer Zerubbabel' in *Jewish Fantasies*, eds D. Stern and M. J. Mirsky, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, pp.71–81.
[80] See R. L. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy. Palestine in Christian History and Thought*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992, p.211.

late as the seventh century CE, then, the figure of Zerubbabel was linked to the removal of symbols that were called *'asheroth*. Was there a memory that the original Zerubbabel, great grandson of Josiah, had sought to remove the symbols of the beautiful lady and her son? The immediate context of the *Sefer Zerubbabel* is thought to be Justinian's building a great new church in Jerusalem, dedicated to Mary, the Mother of God, and presumably housing a beautiful statue. The fragments of information that survive show he was building a new temple and, after more than a thousand years, restoring the Lady to her city.[81] The struggle against Enoch's 'apostates' of the second temple did not end with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE: 'Ezra' excluded the teachings and 'Zerubbabel' looked for the day when the Lady and her Asherahs would again be driven out.

The pattern in second temple period texts is consistent and can be seen in the *Book of Baruch*, written in Egypt in the mid-second century BCE.[82] It is a compilation, another of the books set in the Babylonian exile but addressing the concerns of a later age. Baruch was speaking to the newly-exiled king Jeconiah/Jehoiachin (Bar.1.2-3), and his words were to be sent to the people still in Jerusalem, to be their prayer in the temple that was still standing. Thus the book *is set* between 597 and 586 BCE. 'We are today in our exile where thou hast scattered us, to be reproached and cursed and punished for all the iniquities of our fathers who forsook the LORD our God' (Bar.3.8). A long Wisdom poem follows, and if the *Book of Baruch* was a deliberate composition rather than a random anthology, the reason for the exile is the same as in the *Apocalypse of Weeks*: the rejection of Wisdom: 'Why is it that you are in the land of your enemies, that you are growing old in a foreign country? … You have forsaken the fountain of Wisdom … [Young men] have not learned the way to knowledge, nor understood her paths, nor laid hold of her. Their sons have strayed far from her way' (Bar.3.10, 12, 20, 21). As in the great Wisdom poem in Ben Sira 24, a few words have been inserted here to change it into a poem about the Law (Bar.4.1a), but without them – and they detach easily – it is a sequence about Wisdom/Jerusalem as the mother of erring children. Wisdom/Jerusalem saw the wrath coming on her erring children (Bar.4.9; cf. Prov.1.20-33). She saw them go into captivity and was left like a widow because of what they had done. The language resembles the later parts of Isaiah (e.g. Isa.66.10-14), but here in Baruch the mother figure is also Wisdom. This, then, is how the cause of the exile was remembered in the mid-second century BCE. Wisdom had been rejected and so her city had fallen.[83]

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[81] See volume 2.
[82] See below, p.70.
[83] See below, p.245.

The Cultural Revolution

According to the Deuteronomist, Josiah the boy king began to make changes in the temple in the eighteenth year of his reign, 622 BCE (2 Kgs 22.3). These changes destroyed the older faith and practices of Jerusalem and were more devastating than the destruction wrought by the Babylonians. In 597 BCE the Babylonians looted the gold from the temple and deported the ruling class – which included the priests – the men of fighting age and the smiths who could make weapons (2 Kgs 24.14); in 586 BCE they returned to take the rest of the gold, the silver and the bronze, and then they burned the temple and several other buildings (2 Kgs 25.8-17). They destroyed the externals, but it was Josiah who destroyed – or rather, attempted to destroy – the essential nature of the original faith. He imposed new ways modelled on the prescriptions of Deuteronomy, or so the D writer would have us believe, and in this section we shall trace the relationship between the ideals of Deuteronomy and the purges in the time of Josiah.

The D writers made clear their feelings about the Davidic kings and their temple: Samuel, they said, had tried to dissuade the people from having a king (1 Sam.8.10-18), and Solomon's temple had bankrupted the kingdom: he had to use a part of it – 20 cities in Galilee – to pay the king of Tyre for all the gold and timber he supplied (1 Kgs 9.10-14). All the Davidic kings from Rehoboam (1 Kgs 14.21-24) to Manasseh (2 Kgs 24.3-4) were condemned as apostates who eventually brought about the destruction of Jerusalem. Deuteronomy forbad veneration of the heavenly hosts, on the grounds that this was practised by other nations (Deut.4.19-20), even though 'LORD of Hosts' was an ancient temple title for the God of Israel, whom Isaiah had seen in the temple and described as 'the King, the LORD of Hosts' (Isa.6.5). The 'other nations' must have included Jerusalem before Josiah.

Deuteronomy even denied 'temple' traits to Moses: no vision of God, no golden cherubim, no angel hosts. Deuteronomy emphasised that Moses had received on Sinai *only* the ten commandments, nothing more (Deut.5.22b). This implies that the other Sinai material in Exodus – the revelation to Moses of all the prescriptions for the tabernacle and the worship there (Exod.25-40) – was not to be attributed to him. The Chronicler said that the revelation about building the place of worship had been given by the LORD to David, who in turn had entrusted it to Solomon (1 Chron.29.11-19), and so the Sinai story in Exodus may be the earliest example of Moses acquiring the role of the king. It has long been suggested[84] that the tabernacle in Exodus was a projection of the temple back into the time of Moses. There have been many attempts to refine this fundamental insight, and it now seems there were several stages in the composition: a desert tent, *'ohel*, tradition was

[84] Since J. Wellhausen, op.cit., n.6 above, pp.38ff.

joined to an ancient temple/tabernacle, *miškān*, tradition, which included the heavenly plan. At a later stage, the tent-tabernacle fusion was further refined by a priestly theology.[85] Childs concluded that there had been friction in the initial process of combining the two traditions of temple and desert, but the later priestly writers developed this 'and even incorporated Moses fully within the cult'.[86] Deuteronomy 5.22 represents the friction stage, before Moses had fully adopted his temple role, initiated into the mysteries of the darkness of the divine presence.

All that mattered for Deuteronomy in the early stages of the process was the ten commandments, as emphasised in the prohibition of secret [temple] knowledge, which later tradition would also attribute to Moses. The Sabbath was observed because they remembered the Moses tradition – Egypt and the Exodus (Deut.5.15) – rather than because they were to live in harmony with the LORD's work of creation (Exod.20.11). They were to tolerate no form of religion which they defined as alien – tearing down altars, pillars, Asherim, and graven images, removing even the names of other people from the land (Deut.12.3). There was to be only one place of worship and sacrifice (Deut.12.10-11), and so for practical reasons the secular slaughter of animals for food was introduced (Deut.12.15-16, 20-25). One result of this was that the Passover lambs had to be sacrificed in Jerusalem, and so Passover became a pilgrimage festival rather than one celebrated in the home. Josiah's changes culminated in a great Passover in the temple (2 Kgs 23.21-23) and so the Moses tradition had moved, literally, into the temple.

Josiah began to make changes in 622 BCE, probably because this was a Jubilee year when the temple was restored and renewed. A Jubilee in the first temple period was 50 years, and the record of temple restorations does fit this pattern. Ezekiel received a Jubilee vision of the restored temple in 572 BCE, 25 years after the deportations of 597 BCE (Ezek.40.1). The glory of the LORD returned to the temple, and the tribes received their lands again (Ezek.43.1-5; 48.1-29). Fifty years after Ezekiel's vision, 522 BCE, would have been another Jubilee, and so this was the likely reason for Zerubbabel and Joshua returning from exile to rebuild the temple. Local hostility delayed this project until 520 BCE, the second year of the reign of Darius (Ezra 4.24). A Jubilee in the second temple period was 49 years, giving Jubilee years in 473 BCE and 424 BCE. Since one possible date for Ezra's coming to Jerusalem is 428 BCE, it could have been the Jubilee due in 424 BCE that prompted his return. Reckoning back from Ezekiel's Jubilee vision in 572 BCE gives a Jubilee year in 722 BCE, the most likely date for Isaiah's Jubilee oracle of hope for Jerusalem (Isa.37.30-32), when Assyria was laying siege to Samaria. There was also a Jubilee year in 622 BCE, the

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[85] There is a good summary in B. S. Childs, *Exodus*, London: SCM, 1974, p.535.
[86] Childs, p.537.

eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, when he began his work on the temple, and so it is likely that he, too, was prompted by the Jubilee.

The influence of Deuteronomy is clear in 2 Kings 22–23. Whether this account is an accurate description of what happened, or only a picture of events as the Deuteronomist would have wished them, their influence in this account of Josiah's reign is beyond dispute. This is the version of the story that we shall examine first, whilst bearing in mind the 'other voices'. The king ordered the destruction and removal of everything that Deuteronomy forbad – a wholesale change – but nobody knows who actually instigated this 'reform'. Some think it was brought about by people who came south after the fall of Samaria in 721 BCE, bringing with them the traditions of the northern kingdom, and that the present form of Deuteronomy was compiled in the exile, presenting the return to the land in terms of the original entry, as did the Second Isaiah (Isa.51.9-11).

There are, however, problems with this, since the practices Deuteronomy forbad *were* those of the northern kingdom. King Manasseh, Josiah's grandfather, is presented as the worst of all offenders against the Deuteronomic codes, and, centuries later, Josephus noted that Manasseh's sin in Judah was to copy the people of the north.[87] Deuteronomy ruled that altars should be destroyed, pillars smashed, Asherim hewn down and images burned (Deut.7.5, also 12.3 and 16.21). Human sacrifice was an abomination practised by other nations (Deut.12.31), worshipping the host of heaven was a capital offence (Deut.17.2-7), and all forms of divination were utterly forbidden (Deut.18.9-14). Manasseh did all these: he rebuilt the high places; erected an altar for Baal; made an Asherah and worshipped the host of heaven, even building altars for them in the courts of the temple; he offered his son as a sacrifice; he practised 'soothsaying and augury' and dealt with mediums and wizards (2 Kgs.21.3-6). It was these practices that had caused the fall of Samaria, according to the writer of Kings. The people of the northern kingdom had burned incense at high places, set up pillars and Asherim, worshipped the host of heaven and served Baal, sacrificed their children, and used divinations and sorcery (2 Kgs 17.7-18). If the Deuteronomists came from the north, they cannot have had any influence there, nor be said to represent the traditions of the north. Their ultimate origin is unknown, but their influence has been enormous, not least because it has been so little noticed. They could well have been Enoch's 'apostates'.[88]

The first four chapters of Deuteronomy summarise the Deuteronomists' position and reflect on the causes of the exile: 'If you act corruptly … by doing what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God … you will soon

[87] Josephus, *Antiquities* 10.3.1.

[88] The Church had an uneasy attitude to Deuteronomy: *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* excluded Deuteronomy from the canon because it was not dictated by God and not kept in the ark, see F. C. Conybeare, *The Dialogues of Athanasius and Zacchaeus and Timothy and Aquila*, Oxford: 1898, fo. 77.

utterly perish from the land ... [you] will be utterly destroyed' (Deut.4.25-26). Their views were the very opposite to the 'other voices'. First, they said, the Law was to be their Wisdom (Deut.4.6), showing why poems about Wisdom were later adapted to become poems about the Law.[89] Second, there had been no vision of God. Another account of Sinai said that Moses, the priests and the elders had seen the God of Israel when they ascended Sinai (Exod.24.9-10), but Deuteronomy denied this. 'You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice' (Deut.4.12). Isaiah and Ezekiel saw the LORD – the vision was part of the temple tradition – but this was not allowed for Deuteronomy's Moses. Third, they were to make no graven image (Deut.4.15-18), even though another account says that Moses was commanded to set two golden cherubim on the mercy seat above the ark (Exod.25.17-22). Deuteronomy does not mention the mercy seat. Fourth, they were not to look up to the sun, moon and stars, the host of heaven, lest they be tempted to worship them. Such worship was for others, but not for the chosen people (Deut.4.19), and the punishment for such worship was death by stoning (Deut.17.2-5). The ancient title for the LORD, however, had been LORD of Hosts – the same heavenly hosts – a title that appears 56 times in Isaiah 1–39, 40 times in Jeremiah, and 42 times in Zechariah, but only 6 times in Isaiah 40–55 and not at all in Ezekiel. It seems that the title LORD of Hosts had characterised the Zion and temple tradition of the monarchy, hence its use by Isaiah of Jerusalem, and by Zechariah who was trying to re-establish this after the exile. Its absence from Ezekiel, who was a temple priest immediately after Josiah's changes and went into exile (Ezek.1.3), suggests that he had adopted new ways and abandoned the hosts.[90] In ancient poetry, the hosts were the stars, but they fought the wars of the LORD and so must also have been warrior angels (e.g. Judg.5.20, 23). Just four examples are enough to show how different was the agenda in Deuteronomy from the older ways in Jerusalem and Judah, and even different from another way of telling the story of Moses.

It is clear that the practices forbidden by Deuteronomy – offering child sacrifice by fire, divination and prophecy – had been a part of the pre-Deuteronomic cult. These were the abominable practices of the nations which they were to drive out (Deut.18.9-22), just as the forbidden Hosts had part of the older religion.

First, Josiah abolished child sacrifice (2 Kgs 23.10), and Deuteronomy forbad any dealings with those who offered child sacrifice by fire (Deut.18.10). This horrendous practice was sometimes described as offering children to Molech (Jer.32.35), burning children (Jer.7.31) and

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[89] See below, p.73.

[90] See T. N. D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth. Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies*, Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1982, pp.36–7.

offering children to Baal (Jer.19.5). It must have been part of the older cult – Jephthah sacrificed his daughter (Judg.11.39) – because it is explicitly forbidden in Leviticus. Anyone who offered children by fire 'to Molech' profaned the name of God (Lev.18.21); anyone, whether native born or stranger, who gave a child to Molech was to be stoned to death for defiling the sanctuary of the LORD and profaning his Name, and anyone who condoned the practice was also stoned (Lev.20.1-5). Abraham had thought to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, but learned to offer a ram instead. Even a cursory reading of Genesis 22, however, shows that an earlier story of real sacrifice has been reworked to ban the practice, and this story of offering a substitute for the child was the foundation myth of the Jerusalem temple (Gen.22.2; cf. 2 Chron.3.1). The oldest laws required the offering of firstborn males, both human and animal (Exod.22.29b-30), later modified with the command to redeem the firstborn males of humans and 'asses' (Exod.13.13-15).

There is little doubt that human sacrifice, especially child sacrifice, had a place in the older religion. The problem is 'Molech'. Was this an offering to Molech, an alien deity, or was it a type of sacrifice since 'to Molech' can also be read as 'for a *molk* sacrifice'. A recent study concluded: 'Though the Hebrew Bible portrays child sacrifice as a foreign practice, several texts indicate that it was a native element of Judahite deity worship. As many as three possible cults of child sacrifice may be located within the Hebrew Bible: the sacrifice of the firstborn to YHWH; the fiery *mlk* sacrifice of children to YHWH in Jerusalem; and the sacrifice of children to the *šdym*.'[91] Theophrastus, the Greek who noted that the Jews were astronomers, also said: 'They were the first to institute sacrifices both of other living beings and of themselves, yet they did it by compulsion and not from eagerness for it.' Stern, commenting on this, said: 'How did Theophrastus arrive at this startling statement?' He suggested that Theophrastus had confused the Jews and the Phoenicians, or that he had heard something of the story of Abraham being asked to sacrifice Isaac.[92] This also suggests that what the Deuteronomists forbad survived to such an extent that an outsider, about 300 BCE, considered this one of the chief characteristics of the Jews.[93] The early Christian claim that Jesus was the sacrifice of the only Son so that others could have eternal life (Jn 3.16), is so familiar that its roots are rarely questioned. Less familiar is the detail that when Jesus was taken to

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[91] F. Stavrakopoulou, *King Manasseh and Child Sacrifice. Biblical Distortions of Historical Realities*, Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2004, p.283.

[92] Theophrastus *De Pietate*, in Porphyry *De Abstinentia* II.26, quoted in M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols, Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1976, vol.1, p.11, n.89.

[93] Josephus refuted a similar story, that each year a Greek captive was kept in the temple and then sacrificed. His entrails were eaten by the Jews. Antiochus met one such victim when he captured the temple in the early second century BCE, Josephus, *Apion* 2.8.

the temple as a newborn, no money was paid to redeem him. The ancient law was that the firstborn of man should be redeemed by payment of five silver shekels (Exod.13.2, 13; Num.18.16), but this was never paid for Jesus (Lk.2.22-24). We shall return to this.

Second, Deuteronomy forbad divination (Deut.18.10), but Saul consulted a necromancer (1 Sam.28.8-25), and so it must have been one of the older ways. So too the forbidden diviners and prophets were probably a part of the pre-Deuteronomic cult. Deuteronomy said there was to be no diviner, *qosēm*, no soothsayer, *me'ônēn* [cloud], no augur, *m^e^naḥēš*, [serpent], no sorcerer, *m^e^kaššēp*, no worker of charms, *ḥobēr,* [one who ties together], no medium, *sho'ēl ôb* ['skin bottle'], no wizard, *yidde'oni* [familiar spirit] and none who consulted the dead (Deut.18.10-11). The technical terms used to describe these forbidden practices are all derived from Hebrew or Mesopotamian words, and so are not likely to have been adopted from their neighbours.[94]

Of particular interest is the high priestly oracle, a practice at the very heart of the older ways, since the oracle stones were part of the [high] priest's regalia and kept in the ephod. When David consulted the ephod and the LORD gave him guidance (1 Sam.23.9-12; 30.7-8), he probably consulted these sacred lots, two stones named Urim and Thummim which were put into the breastplate of the high priest (Lev.8.8); in the blessing of Moses they were given to Levi (Deut.33.8).[95] The stones were consulted to determine the will of the LORD: when Moses handed over his authority to Joshua, the LORD did not speak with him directly as he had done with Moses (Num.12.6-8), but Joshua had to receive the words of the LORD through Eleazar the high priest and the stones (Num.27.18-23). When Saul enquired of the LORD and received no answer, he consulted the stones, and discovered that his son Jonathan was guilty of breaking a sacred fast by eating honey (1 Sam.14.41-42). The story suggests that the stones gave a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer, implying that one or other was drawn out from the high priest's breastplate. Later, the LORD did not answer Saul's question either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets, presumably the three methods of enquiry at that time (1 Sam.28.6). The land had been divided among the tribes by lot (Num.26.56), and the high priest had cast lots over the two goats on the day of atonement, to determine which goat would be sacrificed and which driven away into the desert (Num.16.7-10). In the eighth century BCE, in the time of Isaiah and so before Josiah's purges, Hosea implied that *losing the means of divination* was a punishment: 'The children of Israel shall dwell for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or *t^e^rāpîm*. Afterward [they] shall return and seek the LORD their God …' (Hos.3.4-5).

[94] F. H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994, p.261.
[95] The text here is opaque: Thummim and Urim are the only certain words.

The stones did disappear: later tradition said this happened after the time of the former prophets, that is, in the time of Josiah,[96] that they were among the five items missing from the second temple.[97] One account says they were still in the temple but not so helpful.[98] The meaning of their names was forgotten by the second century BCE: the LXX translated Urim and Thummim as *dēlōsis* and *alētheia,* revelation and truth, which undoubtedly described their function,[99] and assumed that the Hebrew words derived from *'ôr*, light, and *tom*, integrity. Josephus said that oracles were given when the stones shone – he too thought that Urim meant 'light' – but that the oracle had ceased 200 years before his time.[100] It is now thought that Urim derived from *'ārar*, curse, and Thummim from *tom*, integrity, so that the stones gave the answer 'guilty' or 'innocent'. Although Josephus thought the oracle stones still existed in the early second temple period, other biblical and rabbinic texts say that the stones were not used after the destruction of the first temple.[101] When the exiles returned from Babylon there were no stones to determine the case of those men whose claim to priesthood was uncertain (Ezra 2.63; Neh.7.65) and in the time of the Maccabees, there was no prophet, presumably with the stones, to determine what should be done with the desecrated altar stones (1 Macc.4.46) or who should be high priest (1 Macc.14.41). Ben Sira, writing in Jerusalem at the beginning of the second century BCE, said that the law had replaced the stones as the means of guidance: 'A man of understanding will trust in the law; for him the law is as dependable as an enquiry by means of Urim' (Ben Sira 33.3).[102] It is likely that the original role of the stones was abandoned after Josiah's purge, and that they were another aspect of the older ways that was replaced by the Law.

Josiah also put away 'the mediums and wizards and the *tᵉrāpîm* and the idols, *gillulîm*, and all the abominations, *šiqquṣîm*, that were seen in the land of Judah and Jerusalem' (2 Kgs 23.24). Isaiah complained that mediums,

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[96] Mishnah *Sotah* 9.12, meaning here all the prophets except Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the post exilic prophets, see H. Danby, *The Mishnah*, p.305, n.8.

[97] Jerusalem Talmud *Ta'anit* 2.1.

[98] There are various lists of the five items present in the first temple but not the second. In the Babylonian Talmud *Yoma* 21b the missing five are: the ark, its cover and the cherubim; the fire; the Shekinah; the Holy Spirit; and Urim and Thummim. The following line – 'They were present but not so helpful' – may apply to all five missing items, rather than just the stones.

[99] Symmachus chose *teleiotēs kai didachē*, perfection and teaching, but Aquila and Theodotion chose *phōtismoi kai teleiōseis,* illumination and perfection.

[100] *Antiquities* 3.8.9.

[101] See n.96 above.

[102] The exception may have been the ancient ritual on the day of atonement, when lots were still cast over the two goats but these may not have been the divination stones, Mishnah *Yoma* 4.1. If the lot for the LORD was drawn first when the high priest put in his right hand, it was a good omen, but for the last 40 years before the destruction of the temple, this never happened. Babylonian Talmud *Yoma* 39b.

wizards and necromancers were consulted by the people in preference to the prophets (Isa.8.19), presumably because they performed a similar service, and *t^erāpîm* had certainly been part of the older religion. There is the story of Micah who employed a young Levite to be his necromancer[103] and priest, thinking that a Levite would bring him good fortune. Men from the tribe of Dan robbed the shrine and took not only the young priest, but also the silver image, *pesel*, the ephod, the *t^erāpîm* and the molten image, *massēkāh* (Judg.17.7–18.20). The *t^erāpîm* and idols that Josiah banished could have been in the country shrines that he destroyed. Some *t^erāpîm* must have been human-sized images as one was put in David's bed to deceive Saul's search party (1 Sam.19.13). Later texts associated the *t^erāpîm* with divination: 'The *t^erāpîm* speak nonsense, and the diviners see lies' (Zech.10.2). The names of idols would be cut off from the land, along with prophets and the unclean spirit (Zech.13.2).

Other *t^erāpîm* were small. When Rachel stole her father Laban's *t^erāpîm* they were small enough to hide in a camel's saddle. Laban called them his *'^elohîm*, gods, suggesting that they were powerful figures, and Rachel's taking them could indicate that they were especially important to the women of the household (Gen.31.17-35). In his report on the excavations at Megiddo, May suggested that the *t^erāpîm* were in fact the terracotta figurines of the Lady that have been found in great quantities at many sites. 'It is incredible that religious objects as prominent and as numerous as are mother-goddess and other figurines should have received no mention in *the extant religious texts* of the Hebrews.'[104] He suggested that 'idols' *'^elîlîm*, were also these figurines (e.g. Lev.19.4; 26.1; Isa.2.8, 18, 20, which implies that these were gold or silver rather than terracotta). Since the word 'idols' is similar to 'gods' *'ēlim*, (e.g. Exod.15.11), this may be more evidence of avoiding the unmentionable. The small figurines may have been miniature copies of a larger statue in the temple(s).

Deuteronomy thus suppressed traditional forms of prophecy. According to Deuteronomy, a prophet could be recognised in two ways: s/he would be like Moses, or s/he would be recognised as a genuine prophet when the prophecies had been fulfilled (Deut.18.22). This completely changed the nature and power of prophecy: teachings had either to repeat the words of Moses, or be fulfilled before they could be recognised. There would be no more waiting for prophecy to be fulfilled, no inspired interpreters who could relate the oracles to contemporary events. This redefinition explains why the writing prophets, apart from Isaiah, are not mentioned in the D histories. Consistent with this tightly controlled system was the centralisation of worship into just one place – Jerusalem – and the prohibition of secret

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[103] Reading *'ob*, necromancer, rather than *'ab*, father.

[104] H. G. May, *Material Remains of the Megiddo Cult*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935, p.27, my emphases.

knowledge. Nobody went up to heaven or crossed the sea to receive revelation; these secret things were for the LORD alone. His people had only to obey the commandments which they had already received (Deut.29.29; 30.11-14).

Later texts show that this ascent to heaven to learn divine knowledge had been the prerogative of the Davidic kings and high priests,[105] and Josiah did depose some priests, described as the *k^e^mārîm* who had kept the high places (2 Kgs 23.5), and other priests, *koh^a^nîm* who had burned incense at high places (2 Kgs 23.9). The latter went to Jerusalem but were not allowed to serve at the altar, although they did eat the unleavened bread among their brethren. To translate *k^e^mārîm* as 'idolatrous priests' (thus AV, RSV) is not accurate, since the distinction between *k^e^mārîm* and *koh^a^nîm* is not clear: there were *k^e^mārîm* for the golden calf in Samaria (Hos.10.5) and *k^e^mārîm* worshipped the host of heaven on the rooftops together with *koh^a^nîm* in the time of Josiah (Zeph.1.4). The word is usually translated 'idolatrous priests', as though to distinguish them from *koh^a^nîm*, but this cannot be the distinction: Joseph's father-in-law was a *kohen* of On, the sun god (Gen.41.50), and the Philistine god Dagon was served by *koh^a^nîm* (1 Sam.5.5). It is possible that a *komer* had significance that later editors sought to obscure, and the indications are that *this was an association with Melchizedek*. The Syriac Old Testament chose *kumra'* to describe Melchizedek, not *kohēn* (Gen.14.18), which may preserve a memory of the distinction between the two types of priest in earlier times. In the ancient laws for the sacrifice of firstlings, all firstborn of humans, cattle and sheep had to be sacrificed (Exod.22.29-30). Other [later?] versions stipulate the sacrifice of firstborn male animals, lambs and calves (Exod.13.12; 34.19), but exemption for the firstborn of a human and of an *ass* (Exod.13.13; 34.20). Why the ass? The Hebrew word for ass, *ḥ^a^môr*, sounded like the word for priest, *komer*, and such wordplay was widely used by the editors. Perhaps the original exemption had been for laity and both classes of priests: those like Melchizedek and also the sons of Aaron.[106]

Wordplay in the opening oracle of Isaiah (Isa.1.2-4) suggests that *komer* did mean the royal priesthood. The rebellious sons of the LORD, he said, the ones in whom the LORD was present in human form, were corrupt, *mšḥtm*, rather than anointed, *mšḥm*. The LORD had reared them, literally made them great, and brought them up, literally raised them up. Both these verbs were used of the kings: the LORD made Solomon great (1 Chron.29.25, translating literally), and the LORD raised David up (Ps.89.19, translating

[105] See below, p.144.

[106] The priest/ass libel was not forgotten: there was a story that Antiochus found a golden ass's head in the temple, Josephus, *Apion* 2.7, a story known also to Tacitus, *Histories* 5.3. Tertullian defended Christianity against the same charge, *Apology* 16.1, and a graffito mocking Christianity has been found in Rome, showing the crucifixion of a man with an ass's head.

literally). The prophet's condemnation was in his wordplay: the anointed sons whom the LORD had raised up and exalted had become corrupt. The prophet contrasted the royal priesthood with humble animals, who had their own wisdom:

- The ox, *šôr*, knows its owner, *qoneh*, sounds very similar to the prince, *śar*, knows his begetter, *qoneh*.
- The ass, *ḥ^{a}môr*, knows his master's crib, *'ēbûs*, sounds very similar to the priest, *komer* knows his master's Jerusalem whose older name was *y^{e}bûs*. (Josh.15.8)

Something had happened to the royal priesthood and they had lost their ability to understand. They had lost wisdom by their rebellion.

The account in 2 Kings 23 presents Josiah as closely following the prescriptions in Deuteronomy, insofar as everything mentioned can be found in Deuteronomy, except Baal, who is not mentioned in Deuteronomy, apart from the place name Baal-peor (Deut.4.3). Josiah removed from the temple everything connected with the worship of Baal, Asherah, and the host of heaven. It was noted long ago that the pairing of Asherah with Baal was the D historian's polemic, associating her with the Canaanite Baal, even though she was not paired with Baal in the Ugaritic texts.[107] Asherah was presented as an alien deity, closely linked to the host of heaven. The Queen of Heaven and the host of heaven were sometimes confused: the pointing of the Hebrew of Jeremiah 7.18 suggests that [offerings for] 'the host of heaven' was to be read there, rather than [offerings for] 'the queen of heaven'. This is how the LXX read the Hebrew, and several Hebrew texts do have the longer form here, *ml'kt* 'the work of' (as in Gen.2.2) instead of *mlkt*, 'the queen of'. Baal is the only alien element in the D historian's account of the temple purge; there is nothing else to suggest that alien elements were being removed from the temple.

The Asherah, the symbol of Lady, attracted particular fury in Josiah's purges. It was not just removed; it was dragged to the Kidron, burned there, beaten to dust and scattered on common graves. The vessels used in the cult of Baal, Asherah and the angels were also burned by the Kidron and their ashes taken to Bethel (2 Kgs 23.4, 6). Why the Kidron? Enoch saw the Kidron in one of his heavenly journeys. He described water that came from the eastern side of the holy mountain, that is, from the Gihon spring, flowing towards the south, and at this site he saw living branches sprouting

[107] S. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, SBLMS, 34; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988, p.74. So too, Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18.20-40), but 'prophets of Asherah' appear only once at the beginning of the account (Kgs 18.19), and play no further part in the story. They look suspiciously like an insertion to link Asherah to Baal and Jezebel.

from a tree that had been felled.[108] For Enoch, this seems to be a significant site; presumably his people were the branches of that fallen tree. Josiah must have been burning Asherah at her own holy place, where the ancient kings had been anointed (1 Kgs 1.38-40). Since the Gihon flowed from Enoch's holy mountain, he must have known a temple on the old Mount Zion, the Ophel, and not on the present 'Temple Mount'.

The expulsion and destruction of the Lady who protected Jerusalem is a likely context for the opening scene in Proverbs. Wisdom calls to her children in the streets and squares of the city,[109] on the top of the walls,[110] in the entrance of the gates of the city (Prov.1.20-21). The Lxx here and in Proverbs 8.3 understood 'calls', *rnn*, to mean 'sing', and so 'Wisdom does not speak in prose but recites poetry'.[111] She is the Lady, and her name here and at Proverbs 9.1 has the plural form 'Wisdoms', indicating that she is a deity.[112] She calls out to the simple, *p^{e}tāyim*, better translated perhaps 'the deceived', to those who love scorning, and to the confident who hate knowledge, and she asks how long they will continue in their ways (Prov.1.22, translating literally). 'Turn to my reproof, behold I will cause my spirit to spring forth[113] upon you, I will make you know my words' (Prov.1.23, translating literally). 'Turning' to Wisdom must have been an idiom, since the punishment for those rejecting Wisdom, according to Isaiah, was that they would not 'turn' and be healed (Isa. 6.10).[114] Both here and in Isaiah, the result of rejecting Wisdom was the devastation of the land that she no longer protected:

> I also will laugh at your calamity,
> I will mock when panic strikes you ...
> Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer;
> they will seek me diligently but will not find me ...
> Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way
> And be sated with their own devices. (Prov.1.26, 28, 31)

If this passage was not prompted by Josiah's purge, then it must have been a similar occasion, of which there had already been several. Note that those who reject Wisdom 'eat the fruit of their own way', a phrase that will prove to be significant.[115]

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108 *1 Enoch* 26.1-2.
109 For Wisdom's haunts, see B. Lang, *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs. An Israelite Goddess Redefined*, New York: Pilgrim Press, 1986, pp.22–35.
110 Thus the Lxx, assuming Hebrew *homiyot*, but MT could be 'in the main concourse', as AV.
111 Lang, p.44.
112 First suggested by W. F. Albright, 'The Evolution of the West Semitic Deity 'An-'Anat-'Atta', American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures, 41 (1925), pp.73–101.
113 The verb is *nb'*, used of springing or flowing water.
114 See below, pp.92–5.
115 See below, pp.361–74.

When Josiah destroyed the Asherah, he also 'broke down the houses of the male cult prostitutes, who were in the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the Asherah' (2 Kgs 23.7), a verse full of difficulties. The Lxx has just one 'house' for the *qᵉdôšîm* in the house of the Lord, and does not translate *qᵉdôšîm* but simply transliterates *kadēseim* or *kadēsin*. These Hebrew letters could also mean 'holy ones', that is, angels. If Josiah had followed Deuteronomy in removing all traces of the heavenly host from the temple, he would have removed the angels too.[116] In this angel house, women apparently wove houses, *bāttîym*, for the Asherah, an unlikely occupation. The Lxx translated this word as *chettiein*, *chettieim*, or *stolas*, suggesting that the original Hebrew was *baddîm*, linens, the plural form used for angels' clothing (e.g. Ezek.9.2, literally 'clad in linens'; also Ezek.9.3, 11; 10.2, 6, 7 and Dan.10.5; 12.6-7).[117] The women in the angel house were weaving linen garments for the Asherah, or maybe for her holy ones, her angel-priests. When John saw the Bride of the Lamb coming to her marriage, she too was wearing 'fine linen, bright and pure', which symbolised the righteous deeds of the saints, that is, the holy ones (Rev.19.8).

The account in 2 Kings describes the material changes – the removal of temple furnishings and personnel, the destruction of rural shrines, their furnishings and personnel, the banning of anyone who practised any form of divination, the banning of child sacrifice – and all this is explained as reaction to the discovery of a book. There is no account of how religious belief changed. Combining the description of Josiah's purges and the prescriptions of Deuteronomy, there would have been no more old style prophecy, no more revelations from the council of the Lord (the secret things, as in Amos 3.7), no more visions of the Lord enthroned (as in Isa.6.1), no more day of atonement (it is not mentioned in the D calendar, Deut.16), no more 'Wisdom' (the Law would replace her, Deut.4.6, symbolised by the removal of 'the Asherah'). This is what the *Apocalypse of Weeks* described as the result of rejecting Wisdom: the people in the temple lost their vision, the great gift of Wisdom; but the early Christians still knew that Wisdom spoke through the prophets (Lk.11.49).

Centuries later, people still remembered what had disappeared in the time of Josiah, diminishing the glory of the Lord in the temple: many temple furnishings as well as 'the Asherah'. Traditionally, there were five missing items, although there are different lists of the five. The lesser glory of the second temple was marked by a distinctive form in a text about building the second temple: 'Build the house ... that I may be glorified,

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[116] The D historian even removes the title Lord of Hosts when copying Isa.37 into his text. Compare Isa.37.16: 'O Lord of Hosts, God of Israel ...' and 2 Kgs 19.15, 'O Lord, the God of Israel ...'.

[117] The singular, linen, was used to describe priests' garments made of linen, e.g. Exod.28.42; Lev.16.4.

says the LORD' (Hag.1.8, my translation). The MT has *wᵉ'ekkābᵉdā*, 'that I may be glorified', but the traditional vowels indicate that it was formerly *wᵉ'ekkābᵉdāh*. Since the missing letter *h* is also the numeral 5, this was said to indicate that the glory of the LORD in the second temple was diminished by 5 items.[118] And so people were reminded that in the time of Josiah the ark was hidden away, along with 'the anointing oil, the jar of manna, and Aaron's rod with its blossoms'.[119] A related tradition said that in the time of the Messiah, the five items would be restored that had been in the first temple but not in the second: the fire, the ark, the menorah, the Spirit and the cherubim.[120] It may be that these were included in the expression 'the vessels made for Baal, for Asherah and for all the host of heaven' (2 Kgs 23.4), since the Hebrew *kēlîm*, 'vessels', really means no more than 'things'. 'The cherubim' may have been the sun chariot which Josiah burned. Now the ark, the jar of manna, Aaron's rod and the anointing oil were kept in the holy of holies,[121] and of the items to be restored, the cherubim and the ark formed the throne in the holy of holies. It is likely that the original menorah was there too, and so Josiah emptied the holy of holies.

The D writer did not mention certain items in Solomon's temple, again because they were associated with the Lady: there were two huge cherubim in the holy of holies (1 Kgs 6.23) but nothing to suggest that they formed the chariot throne (1 Chron.28.18); there were ten lampstands (1 Kgs 7.49), but no menorah standing alone on the south side (Exod.40.24), an omission noted by the Targumist who distinguished the great lamp from the ten.[122] There is no mention of the veil that screened the holy of holies (cf. 2 Chron.3.14), and no mention of temple music, suggesting that these, too, were associated with the Lady. Most of the missing items [and maybe all of them] were associated with the Lady, as we shall see: the cherub throne, the oil which symbolised the Spirit, the menorah/tree of life.[123]

In the Book of Revelation John showed that early Christians had not forgotten the older temple. He described the missing items restored to the holy of holies: the ark (Rev.11.19), the hidden manna restored to the faithful (Rev.2.17), the cherub throne (Rev.4.6-8), the sevenfold spirit before the throne (Rev. 4.5), and the tree of life by the throne (Rev.22.1-2). This was probably the true menorah restored to the temple, the symbol of the Lady whom John saw in the holy of holies with her son (Rev.12.1-6).

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[118] Babylonian Talmud *Yoma* 21b.
[119] Babylonian Talmud *Horayoth* 12a.
[120] *Numbers Rabbah* XV.10.
[121] Tosefta *Kippurim* 2.15.
[122] Targum to 1 Chronicles 28.15.
[123] There had been a menorah in the second temple, depicted on the arch of Titus, but this cannot have been the 'true menorah' since this would only return with the Messiah.

The Calendar

It is likely that Josiah introduced a new calendar to mark the changes, just as Jereboam had marked his separation from Jerusalem by changing the date of the autumn festivals from the seventh to the eighth month, 'which he had devised after his own heart' (1 Kgs.12.32-33). Calendars in the second temple period, as Davies concluded, were a theological issue, closely bound up with the origin of the Qumran community. The solar calendar in particular was retained by 'certain Jews' in order to retain their identity,[124] and, if the Qumran community is typical, these people also preserved the 'other history' of Jerusalem which had no place for Moses. It is unlikely that the people of Jerusalem and Judah adopted the spring new year from the Babylonians, since people who strove to retain their distinctive practices would not have adopted those of their captors. The new names for the months, we are told, came from Babylon,[125] but the calendar itself was so closely bound up with the annual cycle of temple festivals that a change in the time of Josiah is more likely. When the new year was moved to the spring, it served to emphasise the Deuteronomists' Passover and Moses tradition at the expense of the older royal festival of the autumn new year.

There are two calendar systems discernible in the biblical texts: the older one had an autumn new year and the other a spring new year. The writings of the exile and the post-exilic period assume a spring new year, but the most ancient calendar had begun in the autumn. The Gezer calendar, for example, which lists the farmer's activities for each month, begins with two months of ingathering. Although this calendar has been dated anywhere from the eleventh to the sixth century BCE, these are all relatively early dates and show that the older calendar had reckoned from an autumn new year. The ancient list of agricultural festivals in Exodus also shows that the year 'went out' or 'turned' in the autumn (Exod.23.16; 34.22). The ancient prescription for the Sabbath year also implies an autumn new year: if fields were to be left fallow for one complete year of rest (Lev.25.1-7), this requires one agricultural cycle, from autumn sowing to harvest, and even at the end of the second temple period, the Sabbath and Jubilee years were reckoned from autumn to autumn.[126]

Texts from the second temple period use the dates of a spring based calendar. The priestly material in the Pentateuch ['P'] has a spring new year, but this material received its present form in the second temple period. The first prescription for Passover in Exodus 12.2, a 'P' text, is sufficiently emphatic for it to be marking a change: 'This month shall be for you the

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124 P. Davies, 'Calendrical Change and Qumran Origins: An Assessment of VanderKam's Theory', Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 45 (1983), pp.80–9, p.88.

125 *Genesis Rabbah* XLVIII.9.

126 Mishnah *Rosh HaShanah* 1.1.

beginning of months, it shall be the first month of the year for you.' The new year, no longer called the new year, was marked with trumpets on the first day of the seventh month, and the day of atonement, originally a new year rite, was observed ten days later (Lev.23.23-32). The calendar in Deuteronomy, however, begins with Passover, then prescribes Weeks seven weeks after the first grain is cut, and then Tabernacles at an unspecified date. There is no mention of the older temple festivals of new year and day of atonement, nor that Tabernacles falls at the turn of the year (Deut.16.1-17). The writer of Kings also used the spring based calendar: Jerusalem was destroyed in the fifth month (2 Kgs 25.8), which was in the summer (Jer.40.10), and the editor of Jeremiah described the king sat by his fire in the ninth month, which must mean a spring new year (Jer.36.22).

Changing the date of the new year does not, however, necessitate changing from a solar to lunisolar calendar, but it seems that Josiah also made this change. There is evidence in biblical texts for two or even three methods of calculating the calendar. The oldest was the pentecontad calendar, based on a sequence of fifty day periods, still discernible in the fifty days from Passover to Weeks and in the *Temple Scroll* calendar which has two additional feasts not known elsewhere: a festival for new wine fifty days after Weeks, and for new oil fifty days after that.[127] The Therapeuts had a similar system, although Philo's account of them is not clear at this point; they held their chief feast on the fiftieth day – but whether this was every fiftieth day, or *the* fiftieth day, that is Weeks, is not clear.[128] Then there was a solar calendar, used in the first temple, and finally the lunisolar, based on sun and moon.[129]

Now a calendar is more than a way of reckoning time: 'One of its major functions is to determine the proper moments of the year for the observance of the different festivals; and these festivals are, in turn, closely associated with the god or gods of that religion … A solar calendar implies … that the sun, conceived of as a divine being, is its supreme god.'[130] This means that the sun must have been a major divine symbol of the first temple, and that it was religious rather than just political reasons that prompted the change from a sun-based calendar. *Since the Lady was the sun in the neighbouring culture of Ugarit, and the Lady re-appeared in the temple clothed with the sun and crowned with stars (Rev. 12.1), her expulsion from Jerusalem would have been the reason for changing the calendar.* The winged sun of righteousness would rise again with healing in her wings on the day of the

[127] *The Temple Scroll*, 11QT 19-22.
[128] Philo, *On the Contemplative Life* 65.
[129] This theory was explored in detail by J. Morgenstern: 'The Three Calendars of Ancient Israel', Hebrew Union College Annual I, (1924), pp.13–78; 'Additional Notes on the Three Calendars of Ancient Israel', HUCA III (1926), pp.77–107; 'Supplementary Studies in the Calendars of Ancient Israel', HUCA X (1935), pp.1–148.
[130] J. Morgenstern, 'The Cultic Setting of the Enthronement Psalms', HUCA LXXXV (1964), pp.1–42, p.7.

LORD (Mal.4.2), and the winged sun was the royal symbol in Jerusalem at this time.[131]

In the second temple, the controversy was remembered each year at Tabernacles, when the procession stopped at the eastern gate of the temple, turned to face west, and prayed: 'Our fathers when they were in this place turned with their backs towards the temple of the LORD and their faces towards the east; but as for us, our eyes are turned towards the LORD.'[132] The ancestors, then, had worshipped facing east. The Therapeuts, when Philo knew them in Egypt in the first century CE, used to stretch out their hands towards the sunrise and pray for the truth and sharp sighted powers of reasoning, which sounds very like a prayer for Wisdom.[133] The Essenes also prayed at sunrise, facing east 'as though entreating the sun to rise', and when they visited their trench lavatory, they cloaked themselves 'so as not to offend the rays of God'.[134] The 'other voices' knew that alterations to the calendar had been characteristic of the age of wrath, and the *Damascus Document* emphasised that 'the hidden things in which all Israel had gone astray' included the Sabbaths and glorious festivals.[135] As Davies observed: 'The rest of Judaism is presented as having gone astray in this regard, but not by virtue of a recent [i.e. second century BCE] act of rebellion.'[136] The Qumran community still sang of ordering their worship 'in accordance with the laws of the Great Light of heaven'[137] and they understood Hosea 2.11 – 'I will put an end … to her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths and all her appointed feasts' – to mean that the festivals of the nations would be abolished.[138] Many people, then, were still using the ancient solar calendar in the time of Jesus. Morgenstern argued that the change from solar to lunisolar calendar was made by Ezra, early in the fifth century BCE, and this may have been the time when the new calendar was finally imposed in Jerusalem. The major changes, however, were made by Josiah, which is why he removed from the temple any signs of sun worship.

The solar calendar did survive in several forms: the P account of Noah, for example, assumes the 30 day month of the solar calendar.[139] Enoch's *Astronomy Book*[140] sets out a simple solar calendar, or rather, two solar

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[131] A. D. Tushingham, 'New Evidence Bearing on the Two-Winged LMLK Stamp', Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, 287 (1992) pp.61–5.

[132] Mishnah *Sukkah* 5.4.

[133] Philo, *On the Contemplative Life* 89.

[134] Josephus, *War* 2.128, 148.

[135] *Damascus Document* III.13-15, *Jubilees* 1.13-14.

[136] P. Davies, 'Calendrical Change' see n.124 above, p.85.

[137] *The Thanksgiving Hymns* 1QH XX.5.

[138] *Commentary on Hosea*, 4Q166.15.

[139] The flood began on the seventeenth day of the second month, Gen.7.11, and ended on the seventeenth day of the seventh month, Gen.8.4, five months described as 150 days, Gen.8.3. Thus too *Jubilees* 5.27.

[140] *1 Enoch* 72–82.

calendars to which the moon is related. One calendar has twelve months of 30 days, but Enoch's has an extra day at the end of every three months, entrusted to its own angel, and giving a year of 4x91 days, 364 days, and the argument in the *Astronomy Book* is for the 364-day calendar. Enoch's calendar, like that of 'P', is spring based: 'The sun emerges in the first month from the main gate', and the season is the spring.[141] It is a primitive system, using only the 'gates' of the horizon to mark the rising and setting of the sun, and working with seven as the number base. Neugebauer concluded: 'We are dealing with an extremely primitive level of astronomy, which shows no relation to the sophisticated Babylonian astronomy of the Seleucid period, nor to its Hellenistic Greek sequel. Of course no chronological conclusion should be based on such negative evidence for procedures which might well be of local Palestinian origin, uninfluenced by contemporary scientific achievements elsewhere.'[142]

The Qumran *Temple Scroll* assumes a solar calendar, as do the fragments of a priestly calendar,[143] and this primitive system accounts for the plan of the ideal temple set out in the *Temple Scroll*. It may even have depended on the existence of such a temple to establish the fixed points necessary for the calculations. The measurements given for the ideal temple show that the outer gates in the eastern wall were positioned to mark the winter and summer solstices when viewed from the centre of the temple complex: the northeast corner of the northern gate in the eastern wall marked the sunrise at the summer solstice, and the southeast corner of the southern gate in the eastern wall marked the point of sunrise at the winter solstice, *even allowing for the raised horizon of the Mount of Olives*.[144] This was a real system that needed a viewing point at the exact centre of the temple complex, namely, on the eastern end of the roof of the temple, such that the gates could be lined up.[145] The *Book of Jubilees* was emphatic that only the Enochic calendar of 364 days was divinely ordained, and that other calendars led to distortions: 'a day of testimony [will be] a reproach, and a profane day a festival'.[146]

Jubilees also claimed that many of the customs and ordinances attributed to Moses had in fact been in place long before Moses, a curiosity usually explained as rewriting the primeval history and the stories of the patriarchs. But it could also be the 'other voices' reclaiming for their older tradition the

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141 *1 Enoch* 72.6.

142 O. Neugebauer, 'Notes on Ethiopic Astronomy', Orientalia 33(1964), pp.49–71, p.58.

143 11QT and 4 Q320-330.

144 See my article 'The Temple Measurements and the Solar Calendar' in *Temple Scroll Studies*, ed. G. J. Brooke, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989, pp.63–6.

145 One wonders what was meant by the 'things', translating literally, for the host of heaven that Josiah removed, along with altars on the roof of the upper chamber of Ahaz, 2 Kgs 23.4, 12. Something was happening on the temple roof, and it may have included astronomical observations.

146 *Jubilees* 6.37.

customs that had been attributed to Moses by the 'apostates', just as they kept the solar calendar. *Jubilees* says that Noah received from his immediate ancestors Enoch, Methuselah and Lamech the laws for offering first fruits and for keeping the Sabbath year.[147] The feast of Oaths or Weeks,[148] when the first fruits were offered, was kept in heaven from the time of creation, and on earth in the time of Noah. It was a sign that the eternal covenant was renewed. Then Noah's sons neglected the feast, and it was observed on earth again from the time of Abraham, when El Shaddai made a covenant with Abram and changed his name to Abraham.[149] The rules by which Abraham lived came from the books of his forefathers, from the words of Enoch and the words of Noah,[150] and presumably that is where he learned to observe the feast of Tabernacles which he kept for seven days in the seventh month at Beer-Sheba, the Well of the Oath.[151] The Oath(s) and the eternal covenant are prominent in this scheme, as are the instructions for personal purity and sacrifice: Abraham taught them to Isaac, and Isaac passed them on to his grandson Levi.[152] It is often observed that the festivals marking events in the Moses story were joined to existing harvest festivals[153] – Passover to the barley harvest, and the lawgiving on Sinai to the feast of Weeks.[154] This implies that the Moses element in the festivals was a late arrival into the established agricultural calendar, and that there was a basis for the claims in *Jubilees*: the older form of the festivals was known to the patriarchs before the Moses traditions were grafted into the calendar.

Moses took over many aspects of the older cult. Ezekiel [not the prophet], writing perhaps in the early second century BCE, presented the Exodus as a tragic drama in which Moses had a dream. On Sinai he saw a dazzling man enthroned, and the man handed over to him his sceptre and his crown.[155] Moses had been made king. Philo knew this too: Moses became the god and king of his people on Sinai when he entered the thick cloud/darkness, *ʿᵃrāpel*, where God was (Exod.20.21; Deut.4.11).[156] Solomon associated this 'thick cloud/darkness' with the temple (1 Kgs 8.12), and the psalmist knew that thick clouds and darkness surrounded the LORD and his throne (Ps.97.2; also Job 22.13). The cloud was also, as we shall see, a sign of the

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[147] *Jubilees* 7.34-39.
[148] Hebrew *šbʿt* can mean either Weeks, pronounced *shabuot*, or oaths, pronounced *shebuot*.
[149] *Jubilees* 6.17-19; 15.1-10.
[150] *Jubilees* 21.10.
[151] *Jubilees* 17.20-31.
[152] *Jubilees* 21.1-26; *Testament of Levi* 9.1-14.
[153] See e.g. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1965 edn, pp.484–504.
[154] The people reached Sinai in the third month after the Exodus, Exod.19.1, and *Jubilees* says that Moses ascended Sinai on the sixteenth day, that is, on the feast of Weeks, *Jubilees* 1.1.
[155] Quoted in Eusebius, *Preparation of the Gospel* IX.29.
[156] Philo, *Life of Moses* I.158.

presence of the Lady.[157] The thick cloud/darkness was present at both the holy of holies and the summit of Sinai, and it has long been suspected that the autumn festival in Jerusalem lay behind the present form of the Sinai story.[158] The story of Moses on Sinai was modelled on the king entering the holy of holies, where he was enthroned as the divine Son and given the LORD's decree: 'I will tell you of a decree of the LORD: he said to me: "You are my son, today I have begotten you"' (Ps.2.7).[159] It was not until the story of the Exodus was joined with the stories of the patriarchs that Sinai was attributed to Moses and incorporated into the Exodus saga.

Ezekiel's play and Philo's observation were part of a process that included events in the reign of Josiah and the compilation of the Pentateuch: Moses and his tradition took over the older ways of temple and monarchy in Jerusalem. Moses as the divine king is found in many later texts, but Meeks's pioneering study of the material was unable to account fully for this development: 'The traditions we have traced here resist confinement within any of the conventional groupings of sources – "normative", "hellenistic", "Palestinian", "diaspora" or even Jewish over against Samaritan. What is needed ... is the discovery of new categories more narrowly and specifically related to the traditions as such ...' He called for 'boldness and imagination to propose what may have been happening in the ancient circle that produced what one now sees from afar'.[160] Moses superimposed onto the older temple cult in the time of Josiah would explain the later developments. Moses inherited the role of the Davidic king, and traces of the older ways can still be found in the Pentateuch, as we shall see.

Josiah also abolished astronomy from the temple, or so it would seem. Deuteronomy forbad even looking up to the heavens, lest people be tempted to worship the sun, moon, stars – all the host of heaven, that is, the angels (Deut. 4.19; 17.3), and Josiah removed from the temple vessels, *kēlîm*, made for all the host of heaven (2 Kgs 23.4). Now *kēlîm* can mean vessels, but more often it means 'things': weapons (2 Kgs 11.8), musical instruments, (Amos 6.5), or tools (1 Kgs 6.7). These could have been instruments for observing the sun, moon and stars. He also removed rooftop altars which former kings had set up, and removed the horses that had been dedicated to the sun and burned the chariots of the sun (2 Kgs 23.11-12). Now the LXX here has only one chariot, which raises the questions: Is there a reason for the change? And where might this single chariot have been? The D historian does not mention the golden chariot of the cherubim that the LORD told David to set in the temple (1 Chron.28.18) – perhaps it was another of the

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157 See below, pp.264–70.
158 S. Mowinckel, *Le Décalogue*, Paris: Félix Alcan, 1927.
159 See G. von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966, pp.222–31.
160 W. A. Meeks, 'Moses as God and King' in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of E R Goodenough*, ed. J. Neusner, Leiden: Brill, 1970, pp.354–71, p.71.

unmentionable items. Since this was the only known chariot in the temple, it seems that the Greek singular preserves the original – one chariot – and that Josiah burned it. Centuries later, the sun chariot of the LORD reappeared in synagogue mosaics.[161]

Astronomy was not a secular pursuit. The Enoch astronomy book was revealed by the archangel Uriel[162] and it seems there was a map of the heavens on the ceiling of the great hall of the temple since Enoch saw one in his vision, 'The paths of the stars and the lightnings'.[163] The Jews were famous as astronomers, although this is rarely noted. Theophrastus, a Greek writing at the end of the fourth century BCE, said: 'The Jews converse with each other about the deity, and at night time they make observations of the stars, gazing at them and calling on God in prayer.'[164] Little is known of their ancient astronomy, although it is interesting to note that most of the evidence for names of stars and constellations is found in Job, which is either old or consciously archaising and depicts the older ways: Aldebaran and the Hyades, known as 'the Moth', the Pleiades, known as 'the Cluster', Orion, known as 'the Stupid One', and the Chambers of the South (Job.9.9); Ursa Major, known as 'the Winnowing Fan', an unidentified 'Chamber' (Job 37.9); Canis Major and Sirius, known as 'the Hairy Ones' or 'the Evil Ones' (Job 38.13, but the reading in not certain); and the *mazzārôt* (Job 38.32), a mystery, which, despite a feminine plural form, rises 'in *his* season'. They may be the same as the *mazzālôt* worshipped in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 23.5), which were later understood to be the zodiac.[165] Enoch saw 'Muzaloth, the changer of the seasons', in the eighth heaven, together with the twelve signs of the Zodiac.[166] It is possible, however, that the difference between *mazzārôt* and *mazzālôt* is editorial comment to avoid the unmentionable, since the latter could mean 'the ones who have been made worthless'.[167] The *mazzārôt* rising in his season remains a mystery. What is significant is that the LORD then asked Job if he knew how to order the earth in accordance with the pattern of the stars (Job 38.33). The 'old' ways knew that in the rising of *mazzārôt*, the LORD signified something happening on earth: 'On earth as it is in heaven.' Thus, too, Matthew's magi knew that when they saw a particular star rising, the king of the Jews had been born (Mt.2.2-3).

The accounts of Jewish attitudes to astrology and astronomy differ. They agree that the sciences of the stars were first revealed to Enoch and then passed on to Abraham who taught them to other ancient peoples. Now Enoch and Abraham were both key figures in the *Apocalypse of Weeks*,

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[161] See below, p.85, n.35.
[162] *1 Enoch* 72.1.
[163] *1 Enoch* 14.11.
[164] Theophrastus, *De Pietate*, in Stern, op.cit., n.92 above, vol.1, p.10.
[165] See J. McKay, *Religion in Judah under the Assyrians*, London: SCM, 1973, pp.37–40.
[166] *2 Enoch* 21.6, but the line is thought to be a later insertion.
[167] Hoph'al participle from *zll*, be insignificant, worthless.

along with Noah and Isaiah, which suggests that history as told by the 'other voices' had a place for astronomy but not for Moses, and that the rejection of astrology was linked to the Moses and Exodus tradition. This is implied by the curious statement in Deuteronomy – that astral worship was permitted, but not for *the chosen people who had been brought out of Egypt* (Deut.4.19). This appears also in the longer reading of the Lxx at Hosea 13.4: 'I am the Lord your God, who made firm the heavens and created the earth, whose hands created all the host of heaven, and I did not teach you to follow after them; but I led you from the land of Egypt and you knew no God but me.' Later tradition also linked Abraham's rejection of astrology to the time of Josiah. 'In the days of Jeremiah, the Israelites wished to entertain this belief [in astrology] ... Thus it is written, "Thus says the Lord: 'Learn not the way of the nations, nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens'" (Jer.10.2): your ancestor Abraham wished to entertain this belief long ago, but I would not permit him.'[168] This could be no more than a random use of Jeremiah as a proof text, or it could be a memory that something happened to 'Abraham' and astrology in the time of Josiah.

Abraham's link to astronomy was well known outside the biblical texts. Berossus, a Babylonian priest writing early in the third century BCE and quoted by Josephus, said that Abram was 'skilful in the celestial science'.[169] Eusebius quoted from Pseudo-Eupolemus, possibly a Samaritan writing in the early second century BCE: 'Abraham sought and obtained the knowledge of astrology and the Chaldean craft [possibly arithmetic]' and then taught these to the Phoenicians. When he moved to Egypt, he taught the Egyptians too, but attributed the discovery of this knowledge to Enoch.[170] He also quoted from Artapanus, an Egyptian Jew writing in the second century BCE, that Abraham had taught the Egyptian king astrology.[171] Others sought to distinguish between the science of astronomy and how it was interpreted. In fact, this was what distinguished Jews from Gentiles. Josephus explained in some detail that Abraham had been an astronomer who disputed with the Chaldeans about the nature of the stars: they should not be worshipped, since they themselves were obedient to the Creator. There is only a hint of Abraham as an astronomer in the biblical text, when he was asked by the Lord to number the stars 'if you are able to number them' (Gen.15.5). *Jubilees* says more: when Abram sat up all night on the eve of the old new year – the first day of the seventh month – to watch the stars in order to know what the coming year would bring, 'A word came into his heart saying "All of the signs of the stars and of the sun and the moon are all in the hand of the Lord. Why am I seeking?"'[172] Philo says the same, but at greater

[168] *Genesis Rabbah* XLIV.12.
[169] Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.7.1, 2.
[170] Eusebius, *Preparation of the Gospel* IX.17.
[171] Ibid., IX.18.
[172] *Jubilees* 12.17.

length. Rejecting Babylonian astrology was Abram's reason for migrating to Canaan, because he had learned that the stars were servants of the Creator and not independent beings.[173]

Enoch's concern with astronomy is well known. In *1 Enoch* the sun, moon and stars seem to be conscious beings, who keep faith with each other and observe the great cosmic oath.[174] They obey the Creator who calls to them by name, as Isaiah also knew (Isa.40.26).[175] The stars were angels, as in Job 38.7, where the morning stars sang as the world was created. Enoch saw the fallen angels as stars who came to earth to bring corruption.[176] Those who rebelled were punished for their actions and imprisoned in the fiery pit.[177] All this astronomical lore was revealed to Enoch by the angel of peace, that is, the angel of cosmic order,[178] and Uriel revealed to him the complexities of calculating the calendar '… their laws exactly as they are, and how it is with regard to all the years of the world and unto eternity…'.[179]

The Enoch material cannot be dated, but the world of the Enoch texts is very similar to the world of Isaiah in eighth century Jerusalem, in whose writings, as we have seen, there is no reference to Moses and the Exodus. The opening lines, which summarise the theme of the prophecies, say that the sons of the LORD have rebelled (Isa.1.2). Now the sons of the LORD were the human manifestations of the LORD, the kings, of whom the LORD said: 'Today I have begotten you' (Ps.2.7). Isaiah's throne vision (Isa.6.1-13) is so similar to Enoch's throne vision that the latter is sometimes said to be dependent on it; but even if this is the case, why is Enoch dependent on Isaiah, when it has so little contact with any other part of the Hebrew Scriptures? Isaiah, like *1 Enoch,* is full of angels, and the two have the same angel-based political philosophy.[180] The sins of Jerusalem that Isaiah condemned were not those of the ten commandments, but those of the Enoch tradition: pride (e.g. Isa.2.11, 17), rebellion (e.g. Isa.1.23; 1.28; 5.24) and loss of Wisdom (e.g. Isa.2.6; 3.12; 5.21). 'Isaiah and Enoch have much in common, not because a small eccentric Enochic group quilted together a marvellous pattern from older texts wrenched from their earlier context, but because the tradition of the older cult and its vivid imagery persisted long after a small group had attempted to reform and eradicate it.'[181]

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173 Philo, *Abraham* 69-71.
174 *1 Enoch* 2.1; 41.5; 69.20-21.
175 *1 Enoch* 43.1-2.
176 *1 Enoch* 86.1-6.
177 *1 Enoch* 18.13-16.
178 *1 Enoch* 40.8.
179 *1 Enoch* 72.1.
180 See my 'Isaiah' in *Eerdman's Commentary on the Bible*, ed. J. D. G. Dunn and J. W. Rogerson, Grand Rapids: Eerdman's, 2003, pp.492–3.
181 For details of the similarities between Isaiah and Enoch, see my book *The Older Testament*, London: SPCK, 1987, pp.125–41. The quote is from p.137.

Jeremiah

Since we are listening to non-canonical voices in our quest to reconstruct events in the time of Josiah, we must do the same for Jeremiah, who was called to be a prophet in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, in other words, one year after the purges began (Jer.1.2; cf. 2 Chron.34.3). This assumes that a person of that name existed,[182] since scholars cannot begin to agree if Jeremiah even existed, nor on the process by which the present texts of Jeremiah were formed. Many have resorted to other ways of dealing with the text. A recent volume on the latest trends in Jeremiah studies was introduced thus: 'Jeremiah is an intractable riddle.' 'Taken together, the essays in this volume press for an end to "innocent" readings of Jeremiah ... And the turn to Jeremiah as a social semiotic discourse presses for an end to "innocent" biblical theology readings that have companioned historical-critical orthodoxy in one fashion or another.'[183] No help there in our quest for reconstructing what happened in the time of Josiah!

The book of Jeremiah exists in two forms, the Greek version being some 12 per cent shorter than the MT, and with some chapters in a different order.[184] This is unusual, since the Lxx is in general a longer text than the MT. Six Jeremiah scrolls were found at Qumran, of which two were similar to the shorter Hebrew text from which the Greek was translated.[185] This could suggest that the Hebrew text was being augmented throughout the second temple period. The present MT implies that Jeremiah supported the changes made by Josiah: he told the refugees in Egypt that the destruction of Jerusalem was punishment for worshipping the Queen of Heaven, and that the people of Judah who had fled to Egypt would also be destroyed (Jer.44.1-30). His words here, however, are in the style of the Deuteronomists, which could mean either that Jeremiah had adopted their style or that words attributed to him were written by the D editors of his work. As the Jewish Encyclopedia observed: 'Strange to say, of all the events [the political turmoil in Jeremiah's time], the publication of the Deuteronomic Law and the religious reforms of Josiah are *the least prominently brought out in his writings*.'[186] If a prophet named Jeremiah did live in and near Jerusalem in the time of Josiah, he cannot, surely, have been silent about the great changes taking place all around him, especially as his family were priests (Jer.1.1). Perhaps, then, his original words about the work of Josiah have not survived or their context has been changed.

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182 Some recent scholarship doubts that Jeremiah existed.

183 A. R. P. Diamond, Introduction, pp.15, 32, in A. R. P. Diamond, K. M. O'Connor and L. Stulman, eds, *Troubling Jeremiah*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

184 Missing from the Lxx are MT 29.16-20; 33.14-26; 39.4-13; 52.28-30, and in many places the verses in the Lxx are in a different order.

185 4QJer^{b}, 4QJer^{d}.

186 *Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901–6, vol.VII, p.96, my emphases.

The influence of D at some stage in the compilation of Jeremiah can be seen in the characteristic words and phrases of the prose passages, such that Jeremiah is presented as a prophet in their image.[187] We have already seen how the Deuteronomists could rewrite history,[188] and their clear influence in the writings attributed to Jeremiah must be borne in mind when trying to extricate the prophet from his editors. They even put words into the mouth of Moses – the only realistic way to describe their version of the Law of Moses that we find in Deuteronomy – and so attributing their own words to Jeremiah should come as no surprise. 'As the deuteronomic editor of Joshua-Kings appended his prophetic orations to the original authentic prophecies, so the author [of several parts of Jeremiah] attached his sermons to the brief but genuine prophecies of Jeremiah.'[189] Further, it is likely that the D writers were hostile to Jeremiah, as noted by Job: '[Using] evidence of the exilic period, omission of any mention of the prophet in text arguably borrowed from the Jeremiah tradition suggests that the writers of Kings were initially hostile to Jeremiah. But we accept Stipp's conclusion that, as a result of the influence of Shaphan's family, Jeremiah was metamorphosed into a more ardent admirer of Josiah.'[190]

Further, they considered the prophets not so very different from the forbidden diviners and soothsayers, and for true prophecy they had two incompatible criteria: that the words were fulfilled and that the message was compatible with Deuteronomy. In one passage they said any prophecy that came true and was not in accord with their ways was sent by the LORD to test his people: 'If a prophet arises among you ... and the sign or wonder which he tells you comes to pass; [and if he teaches anything other than the words of Deuteronomy] you shall not listen to the words of that prophet ... for the LORD your God is testing you' (Deut.13.1-3). In another passage, they said any prophecy that came true was genuine: 'When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word which the LORD has not spoken ...' (Deut.18.22). On the latter criterion, Jeremiah was a genuine prophet, since he correctly predicted the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. To meet the former criterion, he had to speak the words of the Deuteronomists and be set within their account of the great changes in the time of Josiah. This may be why his original words did not survive in their original context.

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[187] This was shown by e.g. M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, pp.27–32, 138–46, but first suggested by B. Duhm, *Jeremia,* Kurzer Hand-commentar zum Alten Testament 11, T bingen: Mohr, 1901, pp.xvi–Lxx.

[188] See above, pp.6, 32–4.

[189] Weinfeld, op.cit., n.187, p.28.

[190] J. B. Job, *Jeremiah's Kings*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006, p.165, citing H.-J.Stipp, *Jeremia im Parteienstreit* ... Bonner Biblische Beitr ge 82, Frankfurt am Main: Anton Hain, 1992.

It is not easy to assign the oracles to each period of his 40 year ministry, which lasted from about 627 BCE until after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. Any reconstruction of the original 'Jeremiah' is all but impossible, and so a surface reading of the current forms of his book, in isolation from other traditions about him, may not reveal Jeremiah's attitude to the events of his time. Two visions accompany the call narrative described in the opening chapter, and they are presented as an introduction to [that is, a summary of] the prophet's work. The almond rod and then the boiling pot (Jer.1.11-14) suggest there were two distinct aspects to his prophecy: the almond rod was a temple symbol, and the boiling pot represented the foe from the north. It is generally assumed that the almond rod was simply wordplay on the LORD 'watching' over events, and that the foe from the north was the Babylonians. Before exploring further these two assumptions, we must listen to some other voices.

'Other voices' in the second temple period [2 Maccabees, the LXX, and the *Lives of the Prophets*] were speaking when the book of Jeremiah was being collected and edited into its present forms; they associated Jeremiah with the preservation of the temple and looking to its future restoration. After the persecutions and war in the early second century BCE, for example, Judas the Maccabee 'collected all the books that had been lost on account of the war'. One of these had the story of how Jeremiah 'ordered those who were being deported to take some of the fire …'. The priests being led away captive took some of the naphtha used to light the fires in the temple and hid it in a cistern. In the time of Nehemiah, descendents of those priests had restored the sacred naphtha, and so the fire for sacrifice had been rekindled miraculously by the heat of the sun on the oil-soaked wood (2 Macc.1.19-21; 2.1-3). Jeremiah himself had been told to take the temple furnishings to Mount Nebo. 'And Jeremiah came and found a cave, and he brought there the tent and the ark and the altar of incense' (2 Macc.2.5). Later tradition remembered that the ark and the fire which Jeremiah preserved were two of the items missing from the second temple that would be restored in the time of the Messiah.[191] The biblical accounts give no detail of the fate of the ark; when Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem in 597 BCE and Jehoiachin surrendered, 'he carried off all the treasures of the house of the LORD … and cut in pieces the vessels [*kēlîm*, which means 'items'] of gold in the temple of the LORD' (2 Kgs 24.13).

The story persisted that Jeremiah had saved at least some of the temple treasure, and in the mid-second century BCE Judas the Maccabee had a dream in which he saw Jeremiah encouraging him and his men to resist the

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[191] *Numbers Rabbah* XV.10. There were other stories about the fate of the ark: it was taken to Babylon along with the other temple treasures, or it was buried within the temple courts, Babylonian Talmud *Yoma* 53b, 54a; or an angel had come down from heaven to remove the vessels, furnishings and vestments from the temple, *2 Baruch* 6.5-7.

Syrians and to recover the temple. This is the story: Judas dreamed about the murdered Onias, who had been high priest when Heliodorus attempted to rob the temple and the heavenly warriors repulsed him (about 175 BCE, 2 Macc.3.22-34). Such incidents prompted Judas' war to drive the Syrians from Judaea, and during the last months of the struggle, in 161 BCE, Judas dreamed that Onias was still praying for his people and that he saw Jeremiah in the temple. '[A man] distinguished by his grey hair and dignity, and of marvellous majesty and authority.' In the dream, the prophet handed to Judas a golden sword with the words; 'Take this holy sword as a gift from God, with which you will strike down your adversaries.' (2 Macc.15.12-16).

Whom, then, did Jeremiah support in the time of Josiah? Those who purged the temple or those who sought to preserve the older ways of the temple? Josiah's father Amon, son of Manasseh, had been assassinated in a palace coup (2 Kgs 21.23). The people of the land then killed the assassins and made Josiah king when he was only 8 years old (2 Kgs 22.1). In the eighth year of his reign 'he began to seek the God of David his father' (2 Chron.34.3) and four years later he began his purges. This suggests that Josiah began his reign following the religious practices of Manasseh and Amon, and was then persuaded [by the people of the land who had killed his father?] to remove the older ways. One year after the purges began, when Josiah had begun to destroy the high places, the Asherim and the images (2 Chron.34.3), Jeremiah received his call, to stand *against* 'the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land' (Jer.1.18). This is a call to *resist* the changes, and the prophet could later complain: 'For twenty three years ... the word of the LORD has come to me and I have spoken persistently to you, but you have not listened' (Jer.25.3). Could he have said this if he supported the purges that had taken place? Jeremiah was from the priestly family in Anathoth, a village only three miles from Jerusalem which bore the name of the goddess 'Anat. The question that cannot be answered is: Was this name significant? Did Jeremiah's priestly family have any links to this goddess?

Further, it is possible that Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah the high priest in the time of Josiah (Jer.1.1; 2 Kgs 22.4),[192] and so his call to resist the priests would have meant a family quarrel. At one point Jeremiah did prophesy against the men of his home village who were trying to kill him (Jer.11.18-23). They would not heed a prophet who said that the priests no longer had the law, nor the wise any counsel, nor the prophet any word (Jer.18.18). Now the (new?) law in Deuteronomy was that anyone who preached an alien religion had to be killed (Deut.13.9), and this must have been the context for Jeremiah's complaint: 'I hear many whispering. Terror is on every side! "Denounce him! Let us denounce him!" say all my familiar

[192] Thus the Targum to Lamentations 1.1, an idea taken up by R. P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, London: SCM Press, 1986, p.90.

friends, watching for my fall' (Jer.20.10). What was the forbidden religion that Jeremiah preached? Was it perhaps the ancient paths? (Jer.6.16). In the name of the LORD he exhorted his people to return to the older ways.

There had been a high priest named Hilkiah who was the great-grandfather of Jehozadak, the high priest who went into exile (1 Chron.6.13-15), and apparently also the ancestor of Ezra (Ezra 7.1). It is not possible to know if Jeremiah was the much younger brother of Azariah son of Hilkiah through whom the Chronicler traced the high priestly line (1 Chron.6.13), but Jeremiah did protest that he was 'only a youth' (Jer.1.6). A family link to the high priests might explain how a youth from a village near Jerusalem had influential friends at court: Shaphan, a royal scribe (2 Kgs 22.3), whose son Ahikam saved Jeremiah's life (2 Kgs 22.12; Jer.26.24); and another son, Gemariah, presumably a scribe like his father, who had a room in the upper court of the temple precinct, where he allowed Baruch to give a public reading of Jeremiah's first scroll (Jer.36.10). What might a young priest from Anathoth have thought of Josiah's purges?

This first scroll, later read to Jehoiakim, was remembered in tradition as part of Lamentations: chapters 1, 2 and 4 were Jeremiah's early prophecies of what would happen to the city.[193] The sentiments in Lamentations are very like the early parts of Jeremiah and so could well have been his vivid premonitions of the future:

> My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain!
> Oh the walls of my heart!
> My heart is beating wildly;
> I cannot keep silent;
> For I hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.
> (Jer.4.19)

> O that my head were waters,
> And my eyes a fountain of tears,
> That I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.
> (Jer. 9.1; also 9.17-22; 14.1-10)

The Chronicler says that Jeremiah wrote a lament for Josiah that is written in the Laments (2 Chron.35.25), and this may be chapter 3. Lamentations, then, may preserve Jeremiah's description of Jerusalem and his opinion of Josiah, notwithstanding his favourable view of Josiah as a king who ruled justly (Jer.22.15), in contrast to his successors. Jeremiah did not praise him for reforming the temple. The LXX has a brief preface, not in the MT, also

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[193] Babylonian Talmud *Mo'ed Katan* 26a; also *Lamentations Rabbah* LXXVIII which says that the 'many similar words' Jer.36.32 were Lam.2, 3, 4.

attributing Lamentations to Jeremiah. These may all be later attributions, *but then so were the words of the D editors*. There was a struggle to claim Jeremiah for various causes.

Attributing Lamentations to Jeremiah is important for our quest because in the first two poems/prophecies, *the city is described as the Lady*, and we might read the words in Jeremiah's book differently if we knew that he described the city as the Lady. She who was a princess had become a widow (Lam.1.1); the daughter of Zion had lost her majesty (Lam.1.6); the LORD had trodden down the virgin daughter of Judah (Lam.1.15); the LORD had set the daughter of Zion under a cloud (Lam.2.1); the LORD decided to ruin the walls of the daughter of Zion (Lam.2.8); the LORD had demolished her without pity (Lam.2.17). And the cause of this anger was not that the Lady had gone astray with other gods. The LORD had made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions (Lam.1.5) and Jerusalem had become filthy, her sanctuary invaded by enemies (Lam.1.10). The reason for her plight, however, was that her lovers had deceived her, her priests and elders had perished (Lam.1.19), her prophets had seen false and deceptive visions (Lam.2.14), and the sinful prophets and iniquitous priests had shed the blood of the righteous within the city (Lam.4.13). *The daughter of Zion was the victim, not the cause, of what had gone wrong.*

Lamentations does not mention Jerusalem worshipping other gods. *It was her own leaders who had caused the disaster, and in the time of Jeremiah, those leaders were Josiah's group.* The enemies who invaded her sanctuary (Lam.1.10) could have been those who dragged out the Asherah and destroyed the temple furnishings, the lovers who deceived her (Lam.1.19) would have been the kings who were both the sons and the consorts of the Lady. Jeremiah used the same imagery: 'All your lovers have forgotten you; they care nothing for you'. There was no medicine for her wounds and no healing; the LORD had done these things because of her iniquity (Jer.30.12-17). She had lost her tent and her children, her shepherds were stupid and did not inquire of the LORD: 'Therefore they have not become wise and their flock has scattered' (Jer.10.21, my translation). The prophets who spoke false things and the iniquitous priests had brought this terrible punishment upon her. When he saw the slaughter in the countryside, Jeremiah called it a great wound to the Lady:

> The virgin daughter of my people is smitten with a great wound,
> with a very grievous blow.
> If I go out into the field, behold those slain by the sword!
> And if I enter the city, behold the diseases of famine!
> For both prophet and priests ply their trade through the land
> and have no knowledge. (Jer14.17b-18)

It is usually assumed that these were scenes of the Babylonian destruction, but even the D account in 2 Kings 23, which presents Josiah as a hero,

shows that he conducted bloody campaigns against the country priests in both Judah and Samaria. Here, Jeremiah links the bloodshed and famine not to the invaders but to the prophets and priests who had no knowledge, that is, people who had abandoned Wisdom.

Lamentations described the wrath of the LORD when he turned against the Lady and her city, because of the wickedness of her leaders. The Second Isaiah gave a similar picture, as we shall see,[194] and did not suggest that the wrath was caused by apostasy in the way that D described it. The LORD declared that he deserted the Lady in a moment of wrath and had now taken her back (Isa.54.1-17): 'If anyone stirs up strife, it is not from me' (Isa.54.15). *The Lady was the victim*. Jeremiah used the same imagery: 'I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride …' (Jer.2.2); and then:

What do you now gain by going to Egypt,
to drink the waters of the Nile?
Or what do you gain by going to Assyria,
to drink the waters of the Euphrates? (Jer.2.18)

'You shall be put to shame by Egypt as you were put to shame by Assyria' (Jer.2.36). The land had played the harlot with many lovers (Jer.3.1) – but the lovers here are named as the political powers of the time, not as alien gods. So too in Ezekiel's picture of the two sisters who were harlots: Samaria took Assyria and Jerusalem took Babylon, but in each case their lovers turned against them (Ezek.23.1-49). Jeremiah's poem does not imply apostasy. It implies wrong political judgement on the part of the city leaders, but when its meaning is determined by the D prose that follows, it does imply apostasy.

The Lady had been betrayed by the leaders in the city, and here Jeremiah supplements the picture in Lamentations. When he was called as a prophet, he was assured of success: 'against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land' (Jer.1.18). *He condemned a new teaching*, presumably one promulgated by these kings, princes and priests, and in Lamentations this was the betrayal of the Lady. The people going astray, he said, was as unnatural as the sea passing the limit which the Creator had set for it. This was all the work of wicked men and false teachers:

Hear this, O foolish and senseless people,
Who have eyes and see not
Who have ears and hear not.
Do you not fear me? says the LORD:

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[194] See below, p.232.

I placed the sand as a bound for the sea,
A perpetual barrier which it cannot pass;
Though the waves toss, they cannot prevail,
Though they roar, they cannot pass over it.
But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart;
They have turned aside and gone away ... (Jer.5.20-23)

This is the wisdom imagery found in Isaiah's call vision (Isa.6.9-10).[195] Eyes and ears that cannot perceive were both the choice and the punishment of those who rejected Wisdom. In language also reminiscent of Isaiah's call vision, Jeremiah saw the whole land desolate because people had rejected Wisdom; they had become 'stupid children [who] have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil, but how to do good they know not ... I looked on the earth and lo, it was waste and void ...' (Jer.4.22-23).

The cause of the disaster was wicked men and their false teaching within his own community. They were prophesying lies and giving worthless divination (Jer.14.13-16). 'An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction ...' (Jer.5.30-31). He exhorted his people to return to the ancient paths and 'the good way' (Jer.6.16) because rejecting them was bringing disaster, and if we knew what Jeremiah meant by 'the ancient paths' we could reconstruct his teaching with more confidence. 'Has a nation changed its gods?' he asked (Jer.2.11), even though no 'new' gods had been introduced into Judah and Jerusalem for many centuries. The prophets and priests in the temple were wicked (Jer.23.9-12), and this presumably was said after the purges. They had not stood in the heavenly council and so had not proclaimed the words of the LORD (Jer.23.18-22). They had given support to people who despised the word of the LORD: 'No evil shall come upon you' (Jer.23.16-17). Jeremiah saw the daughter of Zion in pain before those attempting to kill her (Jer.4.31). Her killers could have been the Babylonians, or they could have been Josiah's men as they destroyed the Asherah.

False prophets and the priests who followed them could have been the instigators of Josiah's purges.

For wicked men are found among my people;
They wait like fowlers lying in wait.
They set a trap;
They catch men.
Like a basket full of birds,
Their houses are full of treachery;
Therefore they have become great and rich,
They have grown fat and sleek.

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[195] See below, pp.92–3.

They know no bounds in deeds of wickedness;
They judge not with justice
The cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper,
And they do not defend the rights of the needy.
Shall I not punish them for these things? says the LORD,
And shall I not avenge myself
On a nation such as this?
An appalling and horrible thing
Has happened in the land:
The prophets prophesy falsely,
And the priests rule at their direction;
My people love to have it so,
But what you do when the end comes? (Jer.5.26-31)

There are many similar passages. Wisdom manifested in the order of creation had been abandoned by teachers of falsehood. The migrating birds knew the ways of the LORD, but his people did not:

Even the stork in the heavens knows her times;
And the turtle dove, swallow and crane keep the time of their coming;
But my people know not the ordinance of the LORD.
How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us'?
But, behold, the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie.
The wise men shall be put to shame, they shall be dismayed and taken;
Lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD, and what wisdom is in them? (Jer.8.7-9)

There was a new 'wisdom', just as Deuteronomy had prescribed (Deut.4.6), and it was the Law of Moses. Jeremiah said the scribes had falsified the law. They were false shepherds, and there was wickedness even in the temple: 'For from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has gone forth into all the land.' These were people who had not stood in the heavenly council and so had not heard the word of the LORD (Jer.23.15, 22). This is another allusion to Deuteronomy, which implied that standing in the heavenly council to learn from the LORD was not necessary for those who had the Law of Moses (Deut.30.11-14). They had given false comfort that the city would be safe (Jer.23.16-17).

The only revolution in religious teaching that could have prompted Jeremiah's words was Josiah's purge, and, even though the Jeremiah material has been heavily edited and annotated in the course of transmission by the heirs of the Deuteronomists, certain traits in the teaching stand out. He condemned the new ways in Jerusalem, and he was called to resist the kings, princes, priests and people of the land (Jer.1.18). Add to this the possibility that Lamentations 3 was Jeremiah's death lament for Josiah (2 Chron.35.25), one of the texts added after Jehoiakim had burned the original scroll, and a

picture familiar from the Enoch tradition emerges. This poem does not show Josiah as the Deuteronomists' victorious and confident reformer who had purged the temple of evil things, but rather as a man whose expectations had not been met. Isaiah's estimate of Hezekiah, as we shall see, was similar; the D writer showed him as a pious reformer, but Isaiah had at first condemned him to die for sacrilege.[196]

The question always is: 'How long is memory?' How should we understand Jeremiah's attitude to the purges if these words were his lament for Josiah?

> I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath …
> I say 'Gone is my glory and my expectation from the LORD.'
> Let us test and examine our ways and return to the LORD!
> Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven:
> 'We have transgressed and rebelled, and thou hast not forgiven.'
> (Lam.3.1, 18, 40-42)

Those who preserved the Enoch traditions remembered that the LORD abandoned his temple because of the 'reforms'; the refugees in Egypt believed that their city had fallen because they had abandoned the Lady; and the prophets knew that the Lady had been punished because of the actions of her kings, prophets and priests.

If it were possible to remove all the additions from the Deuteronomists – the prose passages that expanded Jeremiah's original prophetic signs and oracles – a rather different prophet might emerge from his editors, but this is not possible. So we return to the call visions and ask how they relate to the later ministry. Jeremiah felt the LORD touch his mouth and empower him to speak (Jer.1.9-10). Jeremiah spoke the words of the LORD (Jer.1.9). Then he received the two visions that summarise the two phases of his ministry: the first vision was the almond branch (Jer.1.11-12), which must have been the first theme of his prophecy. The wordplay here is well known: an almond, *šāqēd*, and watching, *šoqēd*: the LORD watching over his work. Since Jeremiah's family were priests in Anathoth (Jer.1.1), they would have seen their shrine destroyed by Josiah (2 Kgs 23.8). This was a few miles south of Bethel, where Josiah had also destroyed the shrine and burned the Asherah (2 Kgs 23.15), and where Jacob had seen received his vision of El Shaddai (Gen.48.3). El Shaddai, as we shall see, was an ancient name for the Lady,[197] and the older name for Bethel had been Luz, which means almond tree.

Jeremiah, as a young priest, would have known the significance of the almond and its branches, both in the temple(s) and in the cult of the Lady. Perhaps he literally saw an almond branch breaking into blossom, just as

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[196] See below, p.85.
[197] See below, pp.126–40.

he literally saw a cooking pot boiling over. But what he 'saw' concerned the temple and the Lady. The high priestly staff was an almond rod, and true priesthood was recognised by its blossoming (Num.17.1-11). His call vision and his ministry concerned a crisis in the priesthood that he had to oppose, the question of the true and rightful priesthood. He spoke of the priests who had been led astray by false prophecy (Jer.5.31); priests who lived ungodly lives (Jer.6.13; 8.10); priests without knowledge (Jer.14.18); priests who were ungodly, with wickedness even in the temple (Jer.23.11). He warned Pashhur, the priest who put him in the stocks, that he would go into exile because of his false prophecy. Pashhur was a leading member of the temple hierarchy, son of the 'chief officer in the house of the LORD' (Jer.20.1-6), and this is further evidence, were it needed, that Jeremiah was opposed to the regime of those who had purged the temple.

It would be interesting to know what happened to the priests whom Jeremiah opposed. They would have been the elite who went to Babylon with the first deportation (2 Kgs 24.14), and their numerous descendents were among those who returned to build the second temple (Ezra 2.36). They incurred the wrath of the Third Isaiah who accused them of being unfit priests.[198] Ezekiel made it clear that not all the ancient priesthood would be fit to serve in the true temple when it was restored. Only those who had 'kept the charge of my sanctuary, when the people of Israel went astray from me' (Ezek.44.15) would be allowed the full priestly service. The others would become temple servants, barred from approaching any holy things (Ezek.44.9-14). The people who wrote the *Damascus Document* saw themselves as the remnant of the true priesthood, who preserved the correct calendar and feasts, had access again to Wisdom and hoped to regain the lost glory of Adam. The disaster to the priesthood had happened at the beginning of the age of wrath, they said, before Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Jerusalem.[199] This crisis had not been caused by the worship of foreign gods, but by a division within the priesthood, a change in the calendar, losing Wisdom and losing the glory of Adam. *Josiah's revolution in the time of Jeremiah must have been part of this process, its culmination.*

Not only did Jeremiah know the Asherah removed from the Bethel shrine (2 Kgs 23.15) and from the Jerusalem temple, and desecrated by Josiah. He would have known of the people who left Jerusalem to fight alongside the Babylonians (Jer.38.19), presumably to oust the new regime in the city, and tradition remembered for a thousand years that those who deserted to Nebuchadnezzar were young priests.[200] Maybe Jeremiah wanted to join them; he was suspected of deserting (Jer.37.13-14). Later tradition also remembered that along with the ark, the fire and the almond rod, the true

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[198] See below, pp.196–7.
[199] *Damascus Document* CD I-IV.
[200] Jerusalem Talmud *Ta'anit* 4.5.

menorah, a stylised almond tree, was also missing from the second temple and would be restored only by the Messiah.[201] It was in this context that Jeremiah was assured that the LORD was watching over his almond, and of victory in his struggle with 'the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land' (Jer.1.18).

The Asherah was the almond tree/menorah (Exod.25.31-35), and the servants of the LORD were its branches. Isaiah had described the servant as a bruised reed and a dimly burning wick [thus the RSV], but these words can also be read as 'A bruised branch of the menorah he will not be broken, a dimly burning wick he will not be quenched …' (Isa.42.3).[202] *It was this branch of the menorah that Jeremiah saw in his vision, the symbol of the high priesthood and of the high priest's relationship to the Lady.* Why did the LORD need to watch over these particular items, unless they were in danger? The Lady and her Branch were being watched by the LORD, because she and her devotees had been driven from the temple. Zechariah would later prophesy the coming of the Branch, to (re)build the temple (Zech.3.8; 6.12).

According to the present form of his book, Jeremiah condemned the refugees in Egypt for their veneration of the Lady in a speech that is full of D words and phrases (Jer.44.15-30).[203] *The Lives of the Prophets*,[204] however, links him *and no other prophet*, to the Lady and her son in Egypt. The text is confused, and has doubtless been augmented by various Christian scribes, but the gist is that the prophecy of a virgin and her child, represented already in Egyptian worship [the statues of Isis and her son Horus?] would be fulfilled there. Jeremiah gave a sign to the priests in Egypt that their idols would collapse when the Virgin came, and they in turn told king Ptolemy: 'It is an ancient mystery delivered to our fathers by a holy prophet …'[205] Later legend also attributed to Jeremiah a vision of Zion as a weeping widow dressed in black. On his return from Babylon, and before he went to Egypt, he saw the 'mother of seven' (Jer.15.9), the widowed Jerusalem (Lam.1.1).[206] This vision is replicated in the Ezra's vision of the weeping widow who had lost her only son (2 Esdr.9.38–10.28). Ezra saw her transformed into a great city. *The other voices in the second-temple period linked Jeremiah to the Lady.*

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[201] *Numbers Rabbah* XV.10; Babylonian Talmud *Horayoth* 12a.

[202] See my book *The Older Testament*, London: SPCK, 1987, reprinted Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2005, p.229.

[203] See the helpful table in Weinfeld, op.cit., n.187 above, pp.320–4.

[204] A text thought to come from Palestine at the end of the second temple period, but containing older material.

[205] *Lives of the Prophets* 2.8-10. The reference was probably to Isa.19.1, the LORD riding on a cloud to Egypt, but the Lady was represented by the cloud, and so this prophecy was understood, certainly by later Christians, as a prophecy of Mary taking Jesus to Egypt.

[206] *Pesikta Rabbati* 26. PR is a collection of homilies from the eighth–ninth century CE.

Suppose, then, the original Jeremiah was called first to resist the purges and the new teaching, and then to warn what would happen when they had abandoned the Lady and her Wisdom. Isaiah, as we shall see, knew that rejecting the Lady would mean loss of Wisdom and the devastation of the land.[207] The refugees in Egypt said that abandoning the Lady had brought war and famine (Jer.44.18). The *Apocalypse of Weeks* said that after Wisdom was rejected, the temple was burned and the people were scattered.[208] Perhaps the real Jeremiah said the same. The people who deserted to the Babylonians (Jer.38.19), remembered as disaffected priests, returned with the foe from the north.[209]

Further, it seems that the purges had resulted in social disintegration and corruption. Jeremiah's condemnation of the kings and prophets who lived after the purges was that they did not uphold justice and righteousness (Jer.22.1-7, 13-19; 23.9-15). The original temple sermon, before it was reworked by D, denounced the social evils of those who trusted in the presence of the temple to keep them safe (Jer.7.1-15). The D-style condemnations here were not original, as can be seen also in the sign of the broken pot [originally Jer.19.1-2, 10-11]. This was expanded by a D-style sermon addressed not to the elders and senior priests of the original story, v.1, but to the kings of Judah and the people of Jerusalem v.3, denouncing the evils that Josiah had already purged! If Josiah's successors had committed these acts, there would have been no need for the D historian to blame the fall of Jerusalem on the evil deeds of Manasseh (2 Kgs 24.3-4). And would Jeremiah have agreed with the D historian, that Jerusalem was destroyed because of sin inherited from Manasseh (2 Kgs 24.3), when he himself taught that people were only punished for their own sins (Jer.31.29-30)?

It was not just a question of abandoning the Lady; there was a new spirit in Jerusalem, and so a new female figure. In Proverbs, Wisdom described her as the strange woman, or the foreign woman (Prov.2.16, translating literally)[210] and warned her son against the smooth words of this woman who had forsaken the covenant. Others called her Wickedness or Unrighteousness. The same alien woman drew the wrath of the Third Isaiah.[211] In the Pentateuch, however, she was presented in a favourable light. She was Moses' second wife and she was foreign. He married a woman of Cush, and the story linked this to Miriam his older sister and Aaron rebelling against Moses (Num.12.1). In later tradition, as we shall see,[212] Aaron represented the priesthood, and Miriam was Wisdom. In the Pentateuch the upheavals in the priesthood were written into this

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[207] See below, pp.92–3.
[208] *1 Enoch* 93.8.
[209] See n.36 above.
[210] We shall return to this.
[211] See below, pp.197–200.
[212] See below, pp.91–2.

story of the rebellion: after challenging the authority of Moses, Miriam/Wisdom became a leper and had no further role in the story. When she died, however, she was buried in Kadesh and the people had no more water (Num.20.1-2). The death of Miriam/Wisdom and the immediate loss of water is no coincidence.

The strange new woman went into exile in Babylon, and Zechariah saw her return (Zech.5.5-11). In his vision, a parody of Ezekiel's vision of the glory of the LORD departing and returning to the city (Ezek.43.2-3), the prophet saw a woman called 'Wickedness' sitting in an *ephah*, and then two winged women carried her to the land of Shinar, presumably the place whence she had come. We shall return to this vision;[213] suffice it here to say that she represented the group newly returned from Babylon, the spiritual heirs of those who had rejected Wisdom. This woman had replaced the Lady in Jerusalem. A fragment of poetry in *1 Enoch* was inspired by the same events:

> Wisdom found no place where she might dwell;
> Then a dwelling place was assigned to her in the heavens.
> Wisdom went forth to make her dwelling place among the children of men,
> And found no dwelling place:
> Wisdom returned to her place,
> And took her seat among the angels.
> And unrighteousness went forth from her chambers:
> Whom she sought not, she found,
> And dwelt with them,
> As rain in a desert,
> And dew on a thirsty land.[214]

Wisdom, rejected on earth, returned to heaven and was replaced by another woman named Unrighteousness, the spirit of the radically changed Jerusalem.

Jeremiah shared the world view of the Enoch tradition in several ways. Both described how the Lady had been driven from the city, and both also described the political powers of the time as shepherds and their people as sheep. The Enoch tradition told the whole history of Jerusalem as an animal fable. According to these other voices, the LORD abandoned his temple when the sheep became blind – that is, when they rejected Wisdom – and from that point the LORD fought against them by means of foreign rulers. They were called the 70 shepherds,[215] and the people of Jerusalem and Judah

[213] See below, pp.143, 196.
[214] *1 Enoch* 42.1-3.
[215] *1 Enoch* 89.54-60.

were handed over to these 'shepherds' as punishment. Jeremiah used the same image. The soldiers besieging Jerusalem were like 'keepers of a field', *šomᵉrê śāday* (Jer.4.17), a curious expression that could also be read 'the watchmen of Shaddai'. Since Shaddai was one of the titles of the Lady, as we shall see,[216] the army attacking the foolish leaders of Jerusalem included those loyal to Shaddai, those priests who had deserted the city. Shepherds and their flocks would attack the daughter of Zion and cut down her tree(s) (Jer.6.3, 6).[217] Her own shepherds had scattered the flock (Jer.23.1-4), but the LORD would punish the shepherds (Jer.25.34). 'Their shepherds have led [my people] astray' (Jer.50.6).

In a striking sequence from his early years, Jeremiah 'saw' an invading army sweeping down from the north, against the rebellious city. 'Your ways and your doings have brought this upon you ... For the leaders of my people do not know me. They are foolish sons, without discernment' (Jer.4.18, 22, my translation).[218] Their only skill was in doing evil. This is the familiar picture of those who have abandoned Wisdom, and it was followed by the expected consequences: the land reduced to desolation, to the state before creation, *to the state without Wisdom*. 'I looked on the earth, and lo it was waste and void ...' (Jer.4.23; cf. Gen.1.2).

The prophecies of restoration and a happy future (Jer.31.1-22), whether from Jeremiah or a later disciple, also used this imagery of the Lady and the shepherds. The compilation includes a strong criticism of the Mosaic covenant, which the people had broken, and bases the promise of a secure future on the eternal covenant, which, as we shall see, was closely linked to the Lady.[219] The eternal covenant is not named as such, but it was the divine plan that secured the creation and is implicit in the oracles.

> Thus says the LORD,
> who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon
> and stars by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—
> the LORD of Hosts is his name:
> 'If this fixed order departs from me, says the LORD,
> Then shall the descendants of Israel cease from being a nation before
> me for ever.'
> Thus says the LORD:
> 'If the heavens above can be measured
> And the foundations of the earth below can be explored,

[216] See below, pp.126–40.
[217] The text here could be a singular or a collective noun, and so any reference to a sacred tree is not certain.
[218] The MT here has *'ᵉwîl 'ammî*, 'my people is evil', but the LXX read *ēgoumenoi*, that is, *'êlê 'ammî*, 'the leaders of my people'.
[219] See below, p.148.

Then I will cast off all the descendants of Israel
For all that they have done, says the LORD.' (Jer.31.35-37)

The Lady would come back: 'Again I will build you and you shall be built, Virgin of Israel' (Jer.31.4, my translation). She would adorn herself and dance, plant her vineyards and see her scattered children return. 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock' (Jer.31.10). A verse with several now-suspect words invites the Lady to return, but why should these lines in particular have developed so many difficulties?

Set up *waymarks* for yourself, make yourself *guideposts*;
Consider well the *highway*, the road by which you went.
Return, O virgin Israel, return to *these* your cities.
How long will you waver, O *faithless* daughter,
For the LORD has created a new thing on earth, a woman protects a man. (Jer.31.21-22)

All the words in italics present problems.

- Waymarks, *ṣyynym*, is a rare word (found here and at 2 Kgs 23.17; Ezek.39.15), which the LXX read as Zion: 'establish yourself, Zion'.
- Guideposts, *tmrwrym*, is described as a doubtful word,[220] and 'palm trees', *tmrym*, as in Ezekiel's vision of the true temple (Ezek.40.16), is suggested as the original.
- Highway, *mslh* was read by the LXX as *ōmos*, shoulder, from the Hebrew *šcm*, shoulder or Shechem. The consonants *škmh* mean 'to Shechem'.
- 'These', *'lh*, can also be read as 'goddess', which would then be a parallel to 'Virgin of Israel' in the first half of the line.
- 'faithless' *šwbbh*, could also mean 'restored', as in Ezek.38.8, although the LXX read 'dishonoured', *ētimōmenē*.

These lines addressed to the Lady may once have been:

Establish yourself, Zion, make your palm trees,
Set your heart on Shechem, on the road by which you went
Return, Virgin of Israel, return, Lady, to your cities.
How long will you turn away, restored/dishonoured daughter,
For the LORD has created a new thing in the land, a woman protects a man.

[220] Thus BDB, op.cit., n.50, p.1071.

Men from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria came south to mourn at the devastated temple and to bring offerings of grain and incense (Jer.41.5), the offerings associated with the Lady.[221] Now Shechem, along with Zion, was a royal city, and at Shechem there was a great tree called the oak/terebinth of Moreh. This was where Abram had erected the first altar in the land, because the Lord appeared to him there (Gen.12.4-7). Moreh means 'teacher', which suggests that it was a significant tree, but in the ancient Hebrew script, the word Moreh [𐤌𐤅𐤓𐤄] is very similar to Shaddai [𐤔𐤃𐤉], an ancient title for the Lady and the name of the God of the patriarchs (Exod.6.3). It was at Shechem that Jacob concealed his household images under the oak tree (Gen.35.4), and at Shechem that Joshua set up a pillar under the oak tree as a sign of the covenant (Josh.24.26). The people of Shechem made Abimelech their king at the oak of this pillar (Judg.9.6), and it was there that the northern tribes rejected Rehoboam as king and where Jereboam established the centre of the northern kingdom (1 Kgs 12.1, 25). Shechem was the ancient centre of the northern tribes.

The last of the other voices is Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe. Several later works were attributed to him since pseudepigraphy – writing in the name of someone else – was an accepted literary style. The names were not, however, chosen at random, and the original bearer of the name indicated the historical situation in which the later book was set, or maybe the group for which the real author spoke. Baruch, who saw the fall of Jerusalem in the early sixth century BCE, was the 'author' of several later books. One is of particular interest: an anthology compiled, it is thought, by the Jews of Alexandria in the second century BCE and known simply as *Baruch*, to distinguish it from others attributed to him – *2 Baruch, 3 Baruch, 4 Baruch*. We have the text in Greek, but there are many indications that it was originally in Hebrew.

The book is set in the time of Jehoiachin [here called Jeconiah], the king taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BCE. It was sent to him in Babylon, and begins with a long prayer of repentance that the exiled king should use. Then there is a description of the Wisdom that Israel has forsaken (Bar.3.9–4.4), much of it drawn from other texts in the Hebrew Scriptures: Jeremiah, Job, Deuteronomy. The question that cannot be answered is: *were these texts quoted out of their original context?* Was this a *re-reading* of Scripture, or a memory of their original meaning? We can only be certain that this is how some Jews in Egypt were reading the texts, some of the spiritual heirs of the refugees who apparently confronted Jeremiah and blamed the fall of Jerusalem on the neglect of Wisdom. Since this passage in *Baruch* purports to be about Wisdom in the time of Jeremiah, it is important in our quest for the Lady. The writer(s) attributed the book to Jeremiah's scribe, who, in the biblical texts, was his trusted spokesman, and so the Egyptian Jews must

[221] See above, p.21.

have thought that Jeremiah had a more favourable view of the Lady than the one attributed to him by the D editors.

The exiles were in Babylon, said 'Baruch', because they had forsaken the fountain of Wisdom.

> Why is it, O Israel, that you are in the land of your enemies? …
> You have forsaken the *fountain of Wisdom*.
> If you had walked in the way of God, you would be dwelling in peace for ever.[222]

This is very different from the words of the canonical Jeremiah, but exactly how 'Enoch' explained the exile. There was a prophecy:

> … all who live [in the temple] shall be blinded
> And the hearts [that is, minds] of all of them shall forsake wisdom.
> … the house of dominion shall be burned with fire
> And the whole race of the chosen root shall be dispersed.[223]

The phrase 'fountain of Wisdom' became proverbial: a man's speech was compared to 'the fountain of wisdom … a gushing stream' (Prov.18.4); but *1 Enoch* preserves the original temple context. He saw a fountain of righteousness and fountains of Wisdom around the throne and the thirsty could drink.[224] This 'fountain of wisdom' image is characteristic of the other voices: 'Ezra' was told that the books he had to keep secret contained 'the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, *sapientiae fons*, and the river of knowledge' (2 Esdr.14.47). The Qumran *Community Rule* includes a wisdom hymn with similar imagery, telling how the singer had gazed upon hidden wisdom, a fountain of righteousness, a storehouse of strength, and a spring of glory. S/He promised to impart knowledge carefully, for his/her knowledge had sprung from the divine light and s/he had seen eternal things, mysteries.[225] The disciple brought the light to earth: 'Through me you have brought light to the face of the congregation, and shown your limitless power. You have given me knowledge of your marvellous mysteries …'[226]

Ben Sira also describes a disciple of wisdom as one who has eaten and drunk from her: he obeys her and then fills [others] with wisdom, makes them full of understanding, and makes instruction shine forth like a light (Ben Sira 24.25-27).[227] So too Jesus, referring to a now-unknown text: 'If

[222] *Baruch* 3.10-13.
[223] *1 Enoch* 93.8.
[224] *1 Enoch* 48.1.
[225] *The Community Rule* 1 QS XI 3-7.
[226] *Hymns*, 1QH XII. 27-28.
[227] Reading without the obvious insertion in vv.23-24. The Vulgate is different here, see volume 2.

anyone thirst, let him come [to me][228] and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, "Out of him [literally, out of his abdomen] shall flow rivers of living water." Now this he said about the Spirit …' (John 7.37-39). Jesus could have been alluding to Ben Sira, and John's explanation shows that Wisdom was the Spirit: the disciple who drinks becomes a channel for her. Thus too in his vision, John heard the voice of the Spirit and the Bride saying 'Come', inviting the thirsty to drink the living water. And not only those who heard: they had to repeat the invitation to others (Rev.22.17). Jesus said: 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied' (Mt.5.6). As in the old Wisdom poems, those who found Wisdom were deemed 'happy/blessed', wordplay on her ancient name.[229]

Baruch has very similar language and images. Those who have forsaken the fountain of wisdom are exhorted:

> Learn where there is wisdom,
> where there is strength,
> where there is understanding,
> That you may at the same time discern where there is length of days,
>   and life,
> Where there is light for the eyes, and peace.[230]

Not only have these lines much in common with the Qumran hymn and Ben Sira's poem, they also resonate with Proverbs 3:

> Happy is the person who finds wisdom,
> And the person who gets understanding,
> For the gain from it is better than the gain from silver
> And its profit better than gold …
> Long life is in her right hand;
> In her left are riches and honour.
> Her ways are ways of pleasantness
> and all her paths are peace. (Prov.3.13, 14, 16, 17, my translation)

The poem in Baruch continues:

> Where are the princes of the nations …
> Who hoard up silver and gold,
> In which men trust …?

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[228] The earliest versions omit this.
[229] See p.74. Righteousness and Wisdom were kindred concepts.
[230] *Baruch* 3.14.

> Young men … have not learned the way to knowledge,
> nor understood her paths,
> *Nor laid hold of her*
> Their sons have strayed far from her way.
> She has not been heard of in Canaan, nor seen in Teman …
> The merchants of Merran [perhaps Midian?] and Teman …
> have not learned the way to wisdom,
> nor given thought to her paths.[231]

'Laying hold of her' is another echo of Proverbs 3:

> She is the tree of life to those who lay hold of her,
> Those who hold her fast are called happy. (Prov.3.18)

Then *Baruch* has a near-quotation from Deuteronomy, which shows how this crucial verse in Deuteronomy was understood:

> Who has gone up to heaven and taken her
> And brought her down from the clouds?
> Who has gone over the sea and found her,
> And will buy her for pure gold?[232]

Baruch understood that the unnamed object of the Deuteronomists' question was Wisdom.

> [This commandment] is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' (Deut.30.11-14)

Baruch understood that Wisdom had to be brought from heaven or from across the sea, both being references to the heavenly throne in its sea of crystal (Rev.4.6), but the Deuteronomist claimed that the Law was more accessible than Wisdom, it was to hand and had to be obeyed. The Deuteronomists made clear that for them, the Law had superseded and replaced Wisdom: 'Keep [the commandments] and do them; for that will be your wisdom and your understanding …' (Deut.4.6).

The stance of the Deuteronomists explains why the Law *replaced* Wisdom in what had originally been poems in praise of Wisdom. In Ben Sira's poem, for example, two verses about the Law are a rather clumsy insertion into the

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[231] *Baruch* 3.16-17, 20-23.
[232] *Baruch* 3.29-30.

sequence describing the disciple of Wisdom, each beginning with a masculine participle: *ho hupakouōn*, the one who obeys, [then the insertion] *ho piplōn*, the one who fills, *ho anaplērōn*, the one who makes full, *ho ekphainōn*, the one who makes instruction shine forth. The insertion is:

All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God,
The Law which Moses commanded us,
As an inheritance of the congregations of Jacob.
Do not cease to be strong in the LORD,
Cleave to him so that he may strengthen you
The LORD Almighty alone is God
And besides him there is no Saviour. (Ben Sira 24.23-24)

This makes the LORD the one who fills with wisdom and understanding, rather than the disciple of Wisdom. There is a similar insertion in *Baruch:*

She is the book of the commandments of God,
And the law that endures for ever.

Without this, the poem reads:

This is our God; no other can be compared to him!
He found the whole way to knowledge,
and gave her to Jacob his servant and to Israel whom he loved.
Afterward she appeared on earth and lived among men
[insertion]
All who hold fast to her will live, and those who forsake her will die.
Turn, O Jacob and take her; walk toward the shining of her light.
Do not give your glory to another, or your advantages to an alien people.
Happy are we O Israel, for we know what is pleasing to God.[233]

This is Wisdom as she appears elsewhere: her disciples are exhorted to hold fast to her as to the tree of life (Prov.3.18), she is radiant and unfading, easily discerned by those who love her (Wisdom of Solomon 6.12); and her disciples are *happy*, wordplay on one of her ancient names Ashratah (Prov.3.13, 18).

The question is: how or in whom did Wisdom appear on earth before she was replaced by the Law of Moses? This is the Lady we seek, whom Enoch remembered as one rejected on earth and returned to heaven:

[233] *Baruch* 3.35–4.4.

Wisdom went forth to make her dwelling among the children of men,
and found no dwelling place:
Wisdom returned to her place and took her seat among the angels.[234]

There is no shortage of witnesses to the rejection of Wisdom, and in Jeremiah her rejection is represented in his first call vision: the almond tree in danger, the LORD watching over events and calling his prophet to stand against what was happening in Jerusalem.

* * *

Jerusalem was attacked by the Babylonian army only 26 years after Josiah's purge. King Jehoiachin surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BCE and he was taken to Babylon, together with his family, the leading people of the city, the craftsmen and the smiths. The treasure of both temple and palace was taken, and Mattaniah, renamed Zedekiah, was installed as king (2 Kgs 24.11-17). But Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, and so the army returned, the city was besieged and finally fell in the summer of 586 BCE, in the month of Ab. The temple, the palace and all the great buildings of the city were burned, and the rest of the temple furnishings – the gold, the silver and the bronze – were taken (2 Kgs 25.1-17). More people were deported. According to Jeremiah, there was a third deportation five years later, and the total number taken in the three deportations was 4,600. Whether this meant 4,600 people or 4,600 heads of household is not clear, but this was in no way the whole population of the land. The 'empty land' is a figment of popular imagination. Many remained and were a distinct group within Judaean society for centuries. Josephus knew that only those who had been in Babylon came to be called Jews.[235] The others, those whom the Third Isaiah called 'the servants' and 'the chosen ones', would be called by a different name (Isa.65.15). He did not reveal that name, but this is a warning that we should expect to find the remains of the older faith, and so of the Lady, among those who did not call themselves Jews.

There were those refugees who fled and settled in Tahpanhes in the eastern part of the Nile delta (Jer.43.6). There were other Jewish settlements in the delta at Migdol, and also further south in the delta at Memphis, and in upper Egypt, in the land of Pathros, where there was a settlement at Yeb (Jer.44.1). The refugees in Pathros had been devotees of the Lady and it was neglecting her, they said to Jeremiah, that had caused the fall of Jerusalem (Jer.44.15-19). It is no surprise, then, to find the Lady in the texts treasured by, and later composed by, the Hebrew communities of Egypt, texts such as the Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach or the Wisdom of Solomon.

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[234] *1 Enoch* 42.2. *1 Enoch* 94.5 is similar.
[235] Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.5.7.

2

The Early Kings

The Old Religion

The biblical accounts of the first temple period describe two forms of religion: one had shrines and holy places throughout the land, high places where incense was burned, pillars, 'idols', abominable things, Asherahs, people called 'cult prostitutes', vessels for the host of heaven, rooftop altars, secret things, kings who were Melchizedek priests, mediums, wizards, teraphim, a bronze serpent, horses dedicated to the sun and child sacrifice. The other had only one place of worship, emphasised the salvation history of the chosen people and their release from Egypt, had a very negative view of most of the kings, abhorred and destroyed all the objects and traditions of the other religion, and put great emphasis on celebrating the Passover.

The devotees of the latter wrote the Deuteronomic history which became, in practice, the major source of information for the first temple period and was until recently the grid into which archaeological evidence had to be fitted. But there are questions. Is it possible that almost all the kings in Jerusalem were misguided apostates, as the Deuteronomists claim, who permitted and even encouraged alien cults in their kingdom? And what would those kings have considered alien? And who had the right to make this judgement? History, as is well known, is written and rewritten by the winners, especially if they are also the publishers.

Almost all that Josiah swept away can be found in the older religion, even as it is described in the current Hebrew Scriptures. *It was the religion of the patriarchs and the prophets, not the alien cults of Canaan* – if they really were alien. The stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, no matter when they were finally written down in their present form, record how the ancestors built shrines all over the land in the places where the LORD appeared to them, as did the ancient heroes and kings. The LORD appeared to Abram at the oak of Moreh, and so Abram built an altar there (Gen.12.6-7). The LORD appeared to Isaac at Beersheba, and so Isaac built an altar there (Gen.26.23-25). Jacob set up a pillar at Bethel, where the LORD appeared to him (Gen.28.16-18),

and later he set up an altar (Gen.35.1, 3, 7). Gideon saw the LORD[1] and built an altar (Judg.6.22-24). Samson's father Manoah improvised an altar where the [angel of the] LORD appeared to him (Judg.13.19). David built an altar at the threshing floor where he had seen the [angel of the] LORD (2 Sam.24.15-19).

There was much in these old stories to disquiet the Deuteronomist, who emphasised that even at Sinai the LORD was only heard, not seen (Deut.4.12). The Deuteronomist would have condemned both Abram's claim to have seen the LORD and his custom of worshipping at an altar under a green tree. Deuteronomy ruled that all places of worship on mountains and hills and under living trees had to be destroyed (Deut.12.2), and yet Abram had set up an altar at the oak of Moreh[2] (Gen.12.6-7) and chosen to live by the oaks of Mamre where the LORD appeared to him (Gen.13.18; 18.1). The angel of the LORD was seen under the oak at Ophrah (Judg.6.11), and Abimelech was made king by the oak of the pillar at Shechem (Judg.9.6).[3] There was 'diviners' oak' – perhaps an oracle – nearby (Judg.9.37), and Deuteronomy condemned diviners too (Deut.18.10).

When the LORD brought his chosen people out of Egypt and eventually led them into the promised land, they made a covenant at Shechem. Joshua wrote a book of the Law, and set up a great stone to mark the occasion 'under the oak in the sanctuary of the LORD' (Jos.24.26). The LXX has *terebinthon*, so that translator, as late as the second century BCE, thought there had been a great tree in the sanctuary of the LORD at Shechem. In the Hebrew text, however, 'oak tree', *'ēlāh*, was pointed as *'allāh*, curse, another example of later editors expressing their opinion through the way they transmitted the text. The great trees were remembered as a curse, not just as an ancient custom. The same consonants can also mean 'goddess', *'eloah*, and 'under the oak tree', *tht h'lh* can therefore mean 'instead of the goddess'. So what are we reading?

In the days when scholars divided the Pentateuch in various sources [JEDP], J was assigned with some confidence to the southern kingdom in the reign of Solomon, and 'is full of the boldest anthropomorphisms. Yahweh walks in the garden in the cool of the evening; he himself closes the ark; he descends to inspect the Tower of Babel', etc.[4] The 'J' narrative has the stories of Abram seeing the LORD by the oak of Moreh and building an altar there; of Abraham seeing the LORD and two angels by the oaks of Mamre; and of Isaac seeing the LORD at Beersheba and building an altar. The angel of the LORD, who cannot be distinguished from the LORD, appeared to

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[1] Literally 'the angel of the LORD' which probably means a visible form of the LORD.

[2] The name 'Moreh' suggests 'teacher', i.e. the teacher's oak, but its earlier name may have been 'Shaddai's oak'. In the palaeo-Hebrew script, Shaddai and Moreh look very similar, see above, p.70.

[3] The Hebrew here is not clear.

[4] G. von Rad, *Genesis*, ET London: SPCK, 1963, p.24.

Hagar in the desert (Gen.16.7, 9, 10, 11), called to Abraham on Mount Moriah (Gen.22.11, 15), called to Moses at the burning bush (Exod.3.2), and stood in the path of Balaam's donkey (Num.22.21-35), and these are all 'J' elements in the combined narrative. J told the story with theophanies and angels. Now there is no agreement as to the age and provenance of the various strands in the Pentateuch or even if such strands exist, despite von Rad's colourful fancy that J had 'a distinctively spiritual method ... almost without parallel in Old Testament religious history ... like a cool breath from the free thinking era of Solomon.'[5] It is, however, interesting that the older way of analysing the texts assigns certain stories to the time of Solomon, and these stories fit well with the Deuteronomist's picture of the reign of his son Rehoboam: high places, pillars, great trees, holy ones and 'conspiracy'.[6] The Deuteronomists never mention the angel of the LORD, because for them the LORD did not 'appear'.

There are other signs of the old religion in the time of Rehoboam's son Abijah and his grandson Asa. The mother of Rehoboam's heir was Ma'acah, but she was also the mother of his grandson Asa (1 Kgs 15.2, 9-10). This could be simply a mistake in the text. The other accounts – Chronicles and the LXX – have different names for the queen, but they are not consistent. In Chronicles, Abijah's mother is Micaiah (2 Chron.13.2), and Asa's mother is Ma'acah (2 Chron.15.16), but in the LXX Abijah's mother was Ma'acah, and Asa's mother was Ana. The text of Kings describes a practice that was forbidden, a father and son marrying the same woman (Lev.18.6-8), and it may be that the later accounts were independent attempts to deal with a difficulty they found in the Hebrew text. It has been suggested, however, that in time of David, the king in Jerusalem was the consort of the Great Lady, *g^ebîrāh*, and successive kings married the same queen to establish their right to the throne. Thus when David married Bathsheba, he was marrying the Great Lady of Jerusalem,[7] and so it was her son Solomon who had the strongest claim to be the next king. The custom in Jerusalem may be older than the present law in Leviticus. The Great Lady, the mother of the king in Jerusalem, was named, suggesting that she was an important figure (e.g. 1 Kgs 15.2, 10; 22.42; 2 Kgs 8.26; 12.1; 14.2; 15.2, 33; 18.2; 21.1; 21.19; 22.1; 23.31, 36; 24.8, 18). The mother of the king of Israel, on the other hand, was not named, even though she had the title *g^ebîrāh* (2 Kgs 10.13). This may indicate that the queen mother in Samaria was not so important, and that the role of the Great Lady in Jerusalem was unique to that city. Ma'acah, wife of Rehoboam and Great Lady, was the mother of two kings and she was a devotee of Asherah. *In other words, Solomon, who built the temple, married his son and heir to a devotee of Asherah.* It is possible that

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[5] Ibid., p.28.

[6] See below, p.113.

[7] N. Wyatt, 'Araunah the Jebusite and the Throne of David', Studia Theologica 39 (1985), pp.39–53.

this Great Lady of the Jerusalem court 'was' Asherah, that she became the consort of her son, and thus the mother of the next king too. Presumably the law in Leviticus had this situation in mind, and forbad it.

But who or what was Asherah? In most instances, the Lxx translated the word as 'grove', *alsos*, (e.g. Exod.34.13; Deut.7.5; 12.3; 16.21; Judg.6.25, 26, 28; 2 Kgs 23.6; Jer.17.2; Mic.5.14),[8] showing that when the Lxx was translated, Asherah was remembered as a tree. This led to older English versions translating Asherah as 'grove'. The association with a tree was confirmed by instructions to destroy them by cutting them down, *krt* (Exod.34.13); hewing them down, *gd'*, (Deut.7.5); burning them, *śrp* (Deut.12.3), and not planting them, *nt'* (Deut.16.21). Asherah was, or was represented by, a wooden tree-like object.

A new understanding of Asherah was made possible by an archaeological discovery in 1929. Several libraries of clay tablets were found in the city of Ugarit on the coast of Syria, deposited before 1200 BCE and revealing for the first time how the Canaanites themselves described the myths and rituals of their religion. Figures such as Baal, condemned in the Hebrew Scriptures, appeared in their original context. One of them was their great goddess Athirat, who could have been the Ugaritic counterpart of the Asherah. Nothing could be proved – Ugarit was some 300 miles north of Jerusalem, and the library had been deposited at least 300 years before the time of Solomon – but it was a neighbouring culture, the tablets were written in a language related to Hebrew, and there was information about a great goddess. She was the consort of the high god El, who was represented as a bull, and she was the mother of the 70 sons of El.[9] One of her titles was *rbt. 'trt. ym*,[10] variously translated as 'Lady Athirat of the sea' or 'the Lady who treads on the sea', that is, tramples the sea dragon. The Ugaritic *rbt.* corresponds to the Hebrew *gbrh*, Great Lady, which links this goddess directly to the title for the queen in Jerusalem. She was 'the Mother of the gods', *qnyt*, literally the one who begets, the progenitress.[11] One of her symbols was a spindle[12] and she seems to have protected horses.[13] The deities of Ugarit had several names, or perhaps they had been clusters of divine beings who were all one. It is not easy to understand what has been labelled 'gemination', but it does affect how Athirat was understood, and so too, potentially, the Lady in Jerusalem. She was one of El's two wives, the other being Rahmay, and together they were Shapsh, the sun goddess. She was called *nrt ilm*, the lamp

[8] But *dendron* in Isa.17.8; 27.9.
[9] Athirat and her sons, KTU 1.3.v 35.
[10] For example, at KTU 1.3 v 40-41; there are many examples. For discussion on other possible translations, see N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, p.83, n.61.
[11] KTU 1.4 i 23.
[12] KTU 1.4 ii 4.
[13] KTU 1.100.

of the gods.[14] Both of them suckled the human crown prince,[15] and he in turn was the earthly counterpart of their son Athtar (Venus). Athtar was himself geminated into the morning star and the evening star, Shaḥar and Shalem.[16] There are, as we shall see, many traces of this in the first temple.

Information can also be gleaned from the art of Ugarit, the texts helping to identify figures and symbols. There is a carved ivory panel showing a horned goddess with a sun disc on her head, suckling two children; presumably she is Shapsh suckling her geminated son. There is a carved stela with a winged sun over the head of the king; presumably that too represents Shapsh, his mother.[17] All over the region numerous plaques have been found depicting a naked female with curiously styled hair – a 'Hathor wig' – sometimes with a lion, sometimes with snakes or lotus flowers. Her role as the suckler of twins was often represented by two goats feeding from a stylised tree. Asherah, or rather, the Hebrew form Ashratah, is actually written on two large pots found in the eastern Sinai at Kuntillet 'Ajrud. They have been dated to around 800 BCE, and so only a few years after Asa banished his mother/grandmother from being the Great Lady in Jerusalem. On the pots that mention Ashratah and Yahweh there are some roughly drawn pictures: a lion underneath a tree with two browsing goats, two humanoid figures with bovine or leonine heads, and a cow suckling her calf.[18] Since these were found in Hebrew territory, and the accompanying script is Hebrew, the tree and two goats, the cow and calf, and the human with a bovine or leonine head must have been how some Hebrews thought of their deities.[19] Large numbers of small female figurines have also been found, especially in and near Jerusalem, and these too may represent Ashratah. The style of these figurines differs from the plaques, and may show how the Lady in Jerusalem and Judah differed from the goddess elsewhere.

Asa, the second of the two kings who had the same mother, deposed the Great Lady because she had made 'an abominable image', *mipleṣet*, for Asherah (1 Kgs 15.13), a word that is only used here and in the corresponding passage in Chronicles (2 Chron.15.16). It means, literally, 'something to make one shudder', and it looks like another example of a scribe 'correcting' a blasphemy and writing his opinion into the text. The word expected here is *pesel*, idol, and *mipleṣet* is a similar word. The abominable image is not described; it could have been a large figure, of which the small figurines were copies, it could have been a bovine or leonine figure, or a stylised tree as at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, or something completely different. There is no way of knowing. It was probably made of wood, because it was cut down and

[14] Ibid., p.57, n.95; KTU 1.4 viii 21.
[15] KTU 1.15 ii 27-28.
[16] KTU 1.23 V 53-54.
[17] See below, p.157.
[18] See below, p.156.
[19] Just as some Christians depict Jesus as a Lamb and the Holy Spirit as a dove.

burned at the brook Kidron, exactly as Josiah did some three centuries later (1 Kgs 15.13; cf. 2 Kgs 23.6). But why the Kidron? There must have been other places to dispose of ashes, even abominable ashes, and it seems that Josiah was following an established practice, perhaps desecrating the Lady's holy place near the Gihon spring with which, as we shall see, she was closely linked.[20] The scribe's zeal to correct the text may also account for his version of the Great Lady's name. Ma'acah, not so very different from Micaiah, means stupid[21] – significant in the light of the Enoch tradition that the Lady banished from the temple was Wisdom, the exact opposite.

Two centuries later, in the time of Isaiah, Ahaz in Jerusalem followed the old ways, sacrificing and burning incense at high places and under green trees. 'He even burned his son as an offering' (2 Kgs 16.3-4), which Josephus said was copying Canaanite practice. Josephus described Ahaz as impious, transgressing the laws of his country, imitating the kings of Israel and erecting altars in Jerusalem. First he honoured the gods of Syria, then he honoured the gods of Assyria, and he even closed the temple.[22] Much of Josephus' detail was drawn from Chronicles (2 Chron.28.1-27), but neither biblical account says that Ahaz honoured the gods of Assyria. Ahaz paid tribute to Assyria (2 Chron.28.20-21), and went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser, where he saw a bronze altar, presumably different from those he had in Judah, and he ordered one to be made for the temple in Jerusalem. Various other changes were made in the temple at the same time (2 Kgs 16.10-18); the frames and the bronze oxen that he removed from under the 'sea' in the temple court may have been used to make the new altar (2 Kgs 16.17; cf. 1 Kgs 7.25, 27-37), or they could have been used to pay the tribute. Only the last line of the next verse can be read with certainty; '... because of the king of Assyria'. The rest describes changes made in the temple 'because of the king of Assyria' (2 Kgs 16.18). It seems that Ahaz changed the canopy/foundation of the throne[23] they had built in the temple and the outer entrance for the king into the temple of the LORD. Perhaps these actions marked exclusion from his royal role in the temple, what the Chronicler described as closing the temple (2 Chron.28.24), and Josephus interpreted as honouring the gods of Assyria. The Hebrew of 2 Kings 16.18 is not clear, which may be deliberate.

Contact with the king of Assyria, and changes in the temple introduced at the same time, have led some to wonder if this was when alien cults were introduced, Ahaz being forced to adopt new ways as a sign of his new status. There is, however, little evidence that the 'new' ways were Assyrian,[24] and

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[20] See below, p.100.

[21] See L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, tr. M. E. J. Richardson, Leiden: Brill, 1995.

[22] Josephus, *Antiquities* 9.12.3.

[23] Canopy, *mwsk*, but Lxx has *themelios*, foundation, and so read *mwsd*; *k* and *d* are similar letters. The word *šbt* can be read as Sabbath, as in MT or throne as in Lxx.

[24] As argued by J. Mckay, *Religion in Judah under the Assyrians*, London: SCM 1973.

rather more to suggest that they were in fact the 'old' ways. Ahaz had a strong interest in the heavenly host: the temple roof with its altars, built by several kings, was remembered as the upper chamber of Ahaz (2 Kgs 23.12), and presumably the altars were for the cult of the host of heaven. A century later, such worship was condemned by Zephaniah – 'those who bow down on the roofs to the host of heaven' (Zeph.1.5) – and by Jeremiah (Jer.19.13; 32.29), but the heavenly host were part of the older religion. The stars had been warriors in the ancient wars of the LORD (Judg.5.20).

Ahaz also made a 'sundial' on which the shadow of the sun went backwards through ten degrees, the prophetic sign that the LORD would heal Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20.9-11; Isa.38.8). There are some problems in the Hebrew text here: first, it seems to have been cut;[25] and second, it seems to include technical terms. 'I will make the shadow cast by the declining sun on *the dial* of Ahaz turn back ten steps. So the sun turned back on the dial ten steps by which it had declined.' The Qumran scroll here has 'the upper chamber' of Ahaz,[26] suggesting that this room, which incurred the wrath of Josiah (2 Kgs 23.12) was an observatory of some sort. Now in the late afternoon of 6 August 700 BCE, there was a 75 per cent eclipse of the sun over Jerusalem which lasted from half past five until sunset.[27] If the text means: 'I will make the shadow on the steps/degrees on the upper chamber of Ahaz, marking the setting of the sun, return backwards ten degrees', then the effect of the eclipse would have been to make the sunset come ten degrees early.[28] The details of this ancient astronomy are now beyond recovery, but the 'sign' given by Isaiah shows that he knew an eclipse was imminent. Since he also knew about the movements of the planets in the constellations,[29] Isaiah must have been an astronomer.

The new altar Ahaz made was for burnt offerings, but the Assyrians did not offer sacrifice in this way and so this was not a sign of the king having to accept Assyrian forms of worship. He may have been copying an altar of Aram, worshipping the gods of Syria.[30] Ahaz used the new altar to enquire *l^ebaqqer*, a normal action (cf. Ps.27.4). Uriah, whom Isaiah said was trustworthy (Isa.8.2) was told to copy and erect the altar, so there was no change of priesthood in the temple, which also suggests there was no change in the religion (2 Kgs 16.5). In Samaria, the situation was very different. The new people whom the Assyrians settled in the conquered territories brought with them their own gods and their own priests (2 Kgs 17.29-34).

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[25] Thus S. Iwry, 'The Qumran Isaiah and the end of the dial of Ahaz', Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, 147 (1957), pp.27–33, p.31.

[26] 1 QIsa[a].

[27] M. Kudlek and E. H. Mickler, *Solar and Lunar Eclipses in the Ancient Near East*, Neukirchen Vluyn: Butzon and Bercker, 1971, p.62.

[28] See my article 'Hezekiah's Boil', Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 95 (2001), pp.31–42, p.40.

[29] See below, pp.101–2.

[30] McKay, p.7.

Hoshea of Samaria, the contemporary of Ahaz, also had pillars and Asherahs on hills and under trees in his kingdom (2 Kgs 17.10). The religion of Samaria was very like that of Judah, following the ways of the nations and making false idols: 'They made an Asherah, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they burned their sons and the daughters as offerings, and used divination and sorcery ...' (2 Kgs 17.16-17). This, said the Deuteronomist, was their downfall: 'Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight' (2 Kgs 17.18). Samaria fell in 721 BCE, and one popular theory is that the Deuteronomists fled south at this time, perhaps the descendents of the 7,000 faithful who never bowed to Baal (1 Kgs 19.18). Ahab [who reigned 869–850 BCE] had made an Asherah, and his queen Jezebel, the princess of Sidon, maintained a huge number of prophets of Baal and Asherah[31] (1 Kgs 18.19). The great conflict with Elijah ensued, and then Elisha anointed Jehu as king. He killed all the house of Ahab and destroyed the temple of Baal in Samaria (2 Kgs 10.26-28), but nothing is said about destroying the Asherah. Presumably it remained, the Ashimah of Samaria which Amos condemned a century later (Amos 8.14). This name is another scribal 'correction' to replace the unmentionable Asherah with Ashimah, (or rather *Ashmah*) meaning 'offence' or 'guilt' or the act of bringing an offering for offence or guilt.[32] The Greek translator knew the corrected text, and rendered it *hilasmos*, the atonement offering of Samaria, an indication that changes involving the Lady had been made early in the second temple period, before the LXX was translated.

Isaiah, who was an outspoken opponent of the many things – drunkenness, seizing land, social injustice, pride, justifying evil (Isa.5.8-23) – did not condemn Ahaz for building rooftop altars and the new bronze altar copied from Damascus. He did not condemn the sundial, nor even the sacrifice of his son. The list of what Hezekiah removed shows that his father Ahaz had allowed the Asherah and pillars and a bronze serpent that was honoured with incense (2 Kgs 18.4),[33] and yet *Isaiah said nothing about these*. He condemned Ahaz only for failing to trust the LORD when he was threatened by enemies from the north (Isa.7.1-9).

Hezekiah, however, 'did what was right in the eyes of the LORD' (2 Kgs 18.3) and removed everything the Deuteronomists condemned (Deut.12.3). He also rebelled against the king of Assyria (2 Kgs 18.7-8), and the king of Assyria came to suppress the rebellion (2 Kgs 18.13). Hezekiah stripped the gold from the temple and gave all the silver to pay tribute, but when the Assyrian envoys stood before Jerusalem, they taunted Hezekiah's courtiers and warned them not to trust in the LORD. 'But if you say to me "We rely on

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[31] Although the prophets of Asherah are only mentioned at the beginning and could be an insertion. They play no further part in the story.

[32] Hence the AV 'the sin of Samaria'.

[33] Perhaps connected to the serpent stone, 1 Kgs 1.9, although this is a different word for serpent.

the LORD our God", is it not he whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed?' (Isa.36.7). The Assyrians, and presumably their local informants, thought that Hezekiah had been destroying the holy places of the LORD, rather than doing what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and it seems that Isaiah agreed with them. The prophet confronted Hezekiah when he fell ill, and told him he would die. Then Isaiah changed his mind, returned to the king, and told him he would recover (2 Kgs 20.1-7). The text is dislocated and the order of events is not clear, but it seems that the king had caught bubonic plague, seen at first as punishment from the LORD. Then he was healed by the traditional remedy – a fig poultice to draw the plague boils – and lived for 15 more years.[34]

Any attempt to look at the older religion of Jerusalem has to look carefully at the oldest parts of Isaiah. He only condemned Ahaz for failing to trust the LORD, and as reassurance he gave the king the prophetic sign of the Virgin who would bear a son (Isa.7.1-14). This suggests that the Virgin was part of the religion of high places, green trees and child sacrifice. She certainly attracted the attention of the 'correcting' scribes, as we shall see. When the prophet told Hezekiah he would recover, he gave the sign of the shadow on the sundial (2 Kgs 20.8-11), and the sun was a symbol of the Lady. In his call vision, he saw 'the King, the LORD of Hosts' enthroned in the temple (Isa.6.1, 5). The writer of Kings does not mention a throne in the temple, but the Chronicler knew it was part of the temple plan revealed to David: 'the golden chariot of the cherubim that spread their wings and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD' (1 Chron.29.18).

Now the LXX of 2 Kings 23.11 says that Josiah removed only *one* chariot of the sun and burned it, and Ezekiel, a priest in the first temple, described the wheeled chariot throne on which he saw the glory of the LORD leaving the temple (Ezek.10.15-22). It returned in the same way, from the east, and the earth shone with his glory (Ezek.43.2). This seems to be a sunrise vision, and so it is likely that the throne itself, rather than its occupant, originally represented the sun, and the occupant was enthroned in the sun, rather than the occupant representing the sun. This would explain why synagogue floor mosaics more than a millennium later depicted the zodiac and the sun chariot with its driver, and why the Church adopted the sun image for Christ the LORD.[35] If Isaiah saw the same chariot throne as Ezekiel, then

[34] See my article 'Hezekiah's Boil', Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 95 (2001), pp.31–42. Isaiah's change of mind about the reason for Hezekiah's sickness is recorded in Isa.52.13–53.12, where his first opinion about the cause of the suffering changed to recognition that he was the city's sin bearer.

[35] For example, the mosaics at Tiberias and Beth Alpha which depict a human sun, and the mosaic at Sepphoris, which has the orb of the sun in the chariot. Christ as the sun is a natural development of depicting the LORD as the sun. Rabbula gospels have Christ ascending in Ezekiel's chariot, and the 'tomb of the Julii' under St Peter's in Rome has a mosaic (late third–early fourth century) of Christ in a chariot, with a cross where the sun god would have had rays. This is not the Church adopting *sol invictus* imagery.

his call vision incorporated the key elements that the 'reformers' removed: a chariot in the temple, the hosts, and the LORD as the King – the *melek* who became *molech* when the older faith was obscured. The passage that followed his vision was originally about the Lady and the felling of her tree, but later scribes have corrected this text (Isa.6.9-13).[36]

Isaiah

Isaiah received his call vision in the year that king Uzziah died, which has been dated anywhere between 759 and 739 BCE (Isa.6.1), and his initial reaction was: 'Woe is me, for I kept silent' (Isa.6.5).[37] Several ancient translators understood the text this way, rather than 'I am undone' (AV) or 'I am lost' (RSV). What was this silence, and what was it that Isaiah should have spoken against? In the Enochic *Apocalypse of Weeks*, the priesthood began to go astray, to lose their 'sight' and to abandon Wisdom at the time when a 'man' ascended,[38] and if this was the context for Isaiah's call vision, much in this enigmatic text makes good sense. According to the Enochic *Dream Visions*, this was when 'they' forsook the Lord and his tower and lost their sight, several generations before the temple was burned.[39] There had been a dispute between Uzziah and the priests over access to the holy of holies and burning incense, and there had been an earthquake. This is glossed over with few words by the D writer, but the Chronicler has more detail, describing his great prosperity and success, and then explaining his leprosy as punishment for pride in aspiring to priestly status (2 Kgs 15.1-6; 2 Chron.26.16-21; Amos 1.1). The crisis in the priesthood, an earthquake and a leper king were the context for Isaiah's call vision.

In the year that king Uzziah died, Isaiah saw the LORD enthroned in the holy of holies, which was the high priest's vision on the day of atonement. In the instructions to Aaron, written down long after Isaiah's vision but reflecting the temple experience, the high priest was warned to enter the holy of holies only on the day of atonement, because the LORD would appear to him in the cloud over the *kapporet*[40] (Lev.16.2). The prescription for the tabernacle shows that the *kapporet* was a structure with cherubim at each end, set over the ark (Exod.25.17-22), but in the temple, it had been 'the golden chariot of the cherubim that spread their wings and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD' (1 Chron.28.18). This is what Isaiah saw, but he described the LORD enthroned beneath the six-winged seraphim, the fiery

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[36] See below, pp.95–7.

[37] The Hebrew verbs *dmh*, destroy, and *dmm*, be silent, are similar in some forms. Thus Codex Marchallianus and Symmachus *esiōpēsa*, Vulgate *tacui*.

[38] *1 Enoch* 93.8.

[39] *1 Enoch* 89.54.

[40] Usually translated 'mercy seat'.

ones, and in all likelihood, fiery snakes. It may be a mistake to distinguish between fiery serpents such as afflicted Israel in the wilderness (Num.21.6-9; Deut.8.15) and the heavenly beings ['seraphim'], especially as a bronze serpent was set up in the wilderness to protect against them, and this same bronze serpent was still venerated in the time of Isaiah, until Hezekiah destroyed it along with the Asherah (2 Kgs 18.4). The D writer does not say that the bronze snake had been in the temple, but burning incense to it does suggest a temple location. Aaron was instructed to cover the *kapporet* with a cloud of incense (Lev.16.13), and Isaiah said that the house was filled with smoke, *'ašan* (Isa.6.4). The smoke may well have been the incense, but the word *'ašan* implies the smoke of the LORD's anger: 'O LORD of Hosts, how long will you *smoke* against the prayers of your people?' (Ps.80.4, translating literally; also in a temple context Pss.18.8; 74.1; 104.32; 144.5). Isaiah was describing wrath. The foundations[41] of the thresholds shook at the voice of the LORD, and Isaiah's reaction was 'Woe is me, for I kept silent.' What did he regret, at the end of Uzziah's long reign? This was when the snake appeared in the temple that was remembered as Eden.

The account of Uzziah in 2 Kings is brief, considering that he reigned for 52 years, and was, according to the Chronicler's account, a famous and powerful king (2 Kgs 15.2). The D writer of Kings says he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but allowed sacrifice and incense at the high places. He became a leper, and then his son ruled as regent. Chronicles has much more information: he reclaimed and rebuilt Eloth, he built cities in Philistine territory, he conquered neighbouring people who then paid tribute, he fortified Jerusalem with towers and weapons to withstand a siege, he built fortifications in the desert, he dug cisterns for his many livestock, he promoted agriculture, and he built up his army. Then he came into conflict with the priests, and the Chronicler says that pride was his downfall. He wanted to burn incense, a privilege granted only to the house of Aaron, and was struck with leprosy as punishment. He never went into the temple again (2 Chron.26.1-23). No dates are given, except that his son Jotham was 25 when he became king and that he had been regent since his father became a leper.

Was Isaiah alive during these events? The prologue to the book says that he prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, so he could have known of Uzziah's conflict with the priests, especially if, as seems likely, Isaiah was himself a priest with access to the temple. Uzziah is likely to have died at the latest of the possible dates, because Isaiah was still active when the Assyrians threatened Jerusalem in about 701 BCE. If he was an established prophet when Uzziah died and still active around 700 BCE, he was a prophet for nearly 50 years. Something had happened during the reign of Uzziah which caused the LORD's wrath, and Isaiah did

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[41] Literally 'mothers'.

not speak out against it. Presumably he had been in a position to do so. During his temple vision, Isaiah acknowledged what he already knew: he and his people had 'unclean lips' – which implies false teaching.

The Book of Isaiah is a complex tapestry of material from many periods, but chapters 2–12 show the character of the first Isaiah's teaching. [The first chapter is most likely a later preface to the whole book.] He did not condemn incense and sacrifice at high places and under trees,[42] nor did he condemn Ahaz's sacrifice of his son. His oracles were against those who had grown prosperous in the good times under Uzziah, when the land was filled with silver and gold, horses and chariots (Isa.2.7). They worshipped the work of their own hands and consulted mediums and wizards (Isa.2.8; 8.19). The rulers had exploited the poor, and the women of Jerusalem were slaves to fashion (Isa.3.13-24, though some of this may be later comment). Isaiah was a prophet in the tradition of Enoch, and there is no evidence that he knew the Moses traditions. What he described was a land under the influence of the fallen angels who taught about metal working and weapons, cosmetics, enchantments and astrology.[43] The sins he condemned – both at home and in foreigners – were also those of the Enoch tradition: pride, rebellion and abuse of wisdom.

- The proud would be humbled on the Day of the LORD (Isa.2.11, 17; 5.15), so too Ephraim and Samaria (Isa.9.8-10), Assyria (Isa.10.12), Babylon (Isa.14.12), Moab (16.6), and Tyre (Isa.23.8-9).
- Rebellion as a major theme of Isaiah is summarised in the [later] preface to the book: 'Sons have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me' (Isa.1.2), a clear reference to the Enoch myth of the rebel sons of God.[44] The law of the LORD of Hosts and the word of the Holy One had been rejected (Isa.5.24). Both these titles are used in *1 Enoch*,[45] but neither in Deuteronomy. The whole of Isaiah 30 is about rebellion, and the LORD told Isaiah to record this rebellion in a book. The Great Holy One told Enoch to record the condemnation of the fallen angels.[46]
- The people lacked wisdom, and the prologue links this to rebellion. The rebel sons did not know and did not understand (Isa.1.3). The leaders were misleading and confusing their paths (Isa.3.12). Many were inverting values and following their own wisdom (Isa.5.20-21). Those who lacked knowledge would be punished with exile (Isa.5.13).

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[42] This is found in the preface, Isa.1.29-30, and in the third section of the book e.g. ch.57.

[43] *1 Enoch* 8.1-4.

[44] *1 Enoch* 6-11, with an allusion to it in Gen.6.1-8.

[45] Both titles are used many times: e.g. *1 Enoch* 10.1 'the Great and Holy One'; *1 Enoch* 37.2 'the LORD of Spirits'.

[46] *1 Enoch* 14.1.

Before looking at Isaiah in detail, we must look more closely at Uzziah, a king with two names. Isaiah and the Chronicler call him Uzziah (2 Chron.26.1-23, but he is Amaziah in the genealogy, 1 Chron.3.12), and he is Uzziah in the introductions to the books of Hosea, Amos and Isaiah (Hos.1.1; Amos 1.1; Isa.1.1). The writer of Kings, however, calls him both Azariah (2 Kgs 15.1, 3, 6, 7 etc.) and also Uzziah (2 Kgs 15.13, 32, 34). The writer of Kings could have confused the names of Uzziah the king and Azariah the chief priest (2 Chron.26.17, 20), especially as the chief priest is not mentioned in the Kings account, but there are other factors which suggest that the change of name was deliberate. Azariah means 'Yahweh helped', Uzziah means 'Yahweh is my strength'. Although the names look different in English, in Hebrew the difference is only one letter: Azariah is *'zryhw* and Uzziah is *'zyhw*. Confusion or 'correction' would have been easy if there was something blasphemous about the name Uzziah.

Uzziah's mother was a woman of Jerusalem, Jecoliah, meaning 'the LORD has power, the LORD is able' (2 Kgs 15.2) so there is no question of alien influence from her. It is possible however, that the name Uzziah was compounded with the mysterious Uzza, in whose garden two kings were buried: Manasseh and Amon, both condemned by the Deuteronomist as men who did evil in the sight of the LORD (2 Kgs 21.2-26). Centuries later, in the religion of pre-Islamic Arabia, Uzza was the Morning Star, a mighty goddess, but the equivalent deity in the religion of ancient Canaan as reconstructed from Ugaritic material was 'Attr, a male deity who was the son of the sun goddess. He was manifested as Venus, and his two appearances as the morning and evening star had different names: *šḥr* and *šlm*. They were the heavenly aspect of the sacral king, son of the Sun, and the name of his city Jerusalem means 'the possession of Shalem', *y^erûš šālēm* or 'foundation of Shalem', *y^erû šālēm*.[47] In Ugarit, the sun goddess Shapsh also had two names for her two aspects of rising and setting: Athirat and Raḥmay.[48] If the original meaning of Uzziah's name was 'Yahweh is Uzza',[49] 'Yahweh is the Mighty One/the Morning Star', some interesting connections would follow.

- First, Isaiah called Ahaz *Immanuel* 'God with us' (Isa.8.8), and so he believed that the king was God with his people.
- Second, one of the names of the Morning Star appears in the unreadable Hebrew of Psalm 110.3, next to one of the names of the sun goddess. The context, before the new pointing changed the meaning, was the ritual birth in the holy of holies of the royal high priest Melchizedek. The Greek translated *yldtyk* as *exegennēsa*, 'I have begotten you', but the MT pointed the same consonants to

[47] BDB, op.cit., ch.1 n.50, p.436.
[48] KTU 1.23 see Wyatt, op.cit., n.10 above, p.327.
[49] The LORD is called the Mighty One, *'byr*, Isa.1.24.

read 'your youth' thus obscuring the 'birth' of the king. This follows *mrḥm mšḥr* 'from the womb of the morning' (AV, RSV), but more likely the Hebrew equivalent, otherwise lost, of the two names Raḥmay and Shaḥar, mother and son. Thus a heavily 'corrected' Psalm was probably describing the ritual birth of the Davidic king in terms of the Sun giving birth to the Morning Star.

- Third, this ritual in the ancient temple was known to the early Christians. The key figure in Revelation is the strong angel, *aggelos ischuros*, who appears throughout the visions. Revelation is usually understood to describe several strong angels, but the Semitic original underlying the Greek text probably had *'ḥr*, which has two meanings in both Hebrew and Aramaic: 'another' or 'afterwards'. Revelation describes several appearances, one *after* another, of *the* strong angel, rather than several strong angels as implied by 'another angel' in the present Greek text. This strong angel is the LORD who names himself as the Morning Star (Rev.22.16).[50]
- Fourth, John saw this angel ascend from the rising of the sun, that is, rising in the sun, bearing the seal of the living God (Rev.7.2), meaning that he was the high priest bearing the Name. Similarly, the magi saw the star rising in the east, and knew it marked the birth of the king of the Jews who was to be worshipped, that is, was a divine king.

There are many questions: Was Uzziah a Melchizedek priest, the LORD with his people, bearing the ancient version of the title 'Morning Star'? Did the conflict with Azariah the priest mark the moment when the older royal priesthood lost its power to the rising influence of Deuteronomy, Moses and the Aaronites? Was this the moment when Wisdom and the older ways began to fade from Jerusalem and to be replaced by exclusive emphasis on the Law (Deut.4.6)? As with most other questions in the field of Old Testament study, there can be no certain answer,[51] but the fragments of a picture may have survived. When he saw the LORD enthroned in the temple, Isaiah was conscious that false teaching had taken hold of his people and that he had said nothing.

According to the Chronicler, Uzziah entered the temple to burn incense and was pursued by Azariah the high priest and 80 warrior priests – 'men of valour' (2 Chron.26.17). This was a major confrontation over the roles of the chief priest and the king, since Azariah claimed that only the sons of Aaron could burn incense (2 Chron.26.18). The account in Kings does not mention this dispute about incense. Deuteronomy does not mention incense,

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[50] See my book *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000, pp.144–5.

[51] So many certainties, such as the JEDP analysis of the Pentateuch, became certainties only through repetition and familiarity.

and in the Deuteronomist's history, incense is only associated with high places (1 Kgs 22.43; 2 Kgs 12.3; 14.4; 17.11 and many more). Incense in the temple is not mentioned, although both Kings and Chronicles record the great cloud that filled the temple when it was consecrated – presumably incense that represented the glory of the LORD (1 Kgs 8.10-11; 2 Chron.5.13-14). In the Pentateuch incense was only for the sons of Aaron, but according to Jeremiah, it had been burned by many people, including kings and princes, in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, to honour the Queen of Heaven (Jer.44.17, 21).[52] Incense, as we shall see, was one of her symbols.[53]

The reign of Uzziah was also remembered for the great earthquake, and there is earthquake imagery in Isaiah's description of the Day of the LORD (Isa.2.12-19). Amos prophesied in the days of Uzziah, '(for) two years before the earthquake' (Amos 1.1), and it may well be that Amos' vision of the plumb line and the shattered buildings (Amos 7.7-9) was his interpretation of the earthquake. By the time of Zechariah, this was an established image for the Day of the LORD (Zech.14.5). When Josephus told the story of Uzziah, he linked the earthquake to Uzziah's conflict with the priests. As the king entered the temple to burn incense there was a great earthquake, and the temple was cracked. The sun shone through onto Uzziah's face and caused his leprosy.[54]

Now this dispute over the right to burn incense is very similar to the story in Numbers 16, where Korah, Dathan and Abiram challenged Aaron's exclusive right to offer incense, and the stories in the Pentateuch were often thinly veiled accounts of events in later history.[55] The present text seems to conflate at least two stories of rebellion against Moses and the Aaronites: Korah representing the other Levites, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Reuben the firstborn. All the congregation were holy people, they said, so why should Moses and the Aaronites exalt themselves above the assembly of the LORD? (Num.16.3). Moses gave a sign: if the ground opened and swallowed the rebels, that would be proof that only the house of Aaron could offer incense. The ground opened, and the rebels were engulfed; only their bronze censers remained, which were beaten into a covering for the altar, as a warning to the people (Num.16.39). The first people to challenge the authority of Moses, however, had been his own family, Aaron and Miriam. Miriam was punished with leprosy (Num.12.9-10) and excluded from the camp for seven days. She then returned to the camp, but played no more part in the story until she died in Kadesh, meaning 'the holy place' (Num.20.1). This might be no more than an interesting coincidence, were it not for the fact that later tradition remembered Miriam, Moses' *older* sister, as Wisdom, who was represented by the incense in the temple (Ben

[52] The same root in both cases, *qtr.*

[53] See volume 2.

[54] Josephus, *Antiquities* 9.10.4.

[55] See also below, p.333.

Sira 24.15)[56] and so it is possible that this sequence in Numbers reflects the power struggles between the Lady and the rising power of Moses and the Aaronite priests. Uzziah burning the incense, the leprosy and the earthquake were woven into the older saga. Uzziah was banished, and, we assume, did not burn incense again.

The disaster in Uzziah's reign that Isaiah did not oppose may account for the words of the LORD that followed his temple vision. They include some of the most opaque Hebrew in the whole Bible, and immediately raise the question: why is this part of the text unreadable? Isaiah had to proclaim that the people would hear and not understand, see and not know. This was their punishment. Isaiah was to speak with newly purified lips, and so presumably to give the true teaching that had been abandoned. His lips had been purified by a coal, brought from the altar – presumably at the command of the Lord – by one of the seraphim. This seraph had hands and spoke with a human voice. *In other words, part of Isaiah's temple world view was a talking snake figure with wings and hands who was a messenger from the Lord.*

The Hebrew text is a command from the LORD, which has caused problems as to why the LORD would make this command: hear and do not understand, *byn*, see and do not know, *yd'*, (Isa.6.9) two verbs that are the original definition of Wisdom. The proverbs of Solomon were given so that people could know, *yd'*, wisdom and instruction/discipline, and understand, *byn*, the words of understanding (Prov.1.2, translating literally). The Greek translation is worded as a prediction rather than a command, and so is less problematic: 'You shall hear and not understand, see and not know.'

Then there is an oracle in chiastic form, with wordplay characteristic of temple discourse:

Make the heart of this people fat
  And their ears heavy
    And shut their eyes
    Lest they see with their eyes
  And hear with their ears
And understand with their heart
And turn and be healed. (Isa.6.10)

The heart, *lb*, is better translated 'mind', and so the punishment prescribed by the LORD is loss of understanding. Their mind would become fat, *šmn*, meaning prosperous and arrogant, but the same word also means oil for anointing as in 'the oil of gladness' (Ps.45.7), or in the anointing of Solomon (1 Kgs 1.39), or as the basis for the holy anointing oil prescribed for the tabernacle (Exod. 30.23-24). Here there is the implied contrast: between

[56] See volume 2.

the ‘fat’ mind and the anointed mind. Their ears would become heavy, *kbd*, a word that also means ‘glory’, and their eyes would be [literally] smeared over, *š“*, where the very similar word *š‘h*, means ‘to look’ as in ‘You do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek the LORD’ (Isa.31.1). The contrast is implied in the wordplay. Instead of an anointed mind which enabled the anointed one to see the glory and look on the LORD, the people had chosen something very different. The pattern of anointing the forehead, the ears and the eyes may well be an allusion to the anointing ritual for the Davidic kings whose liturgy survives in Psalm 19.7-10,[57] especially as the Babylonian Talmud remembered, many centuries later, that the high priests had been anointed with a X on the forehead, the sign of the Name, and then on the eyelids.[58] The only dispute was over the order in which anointing was done.

The proposed order of events in Isaiah’s time is: the people’s rejection of Wisdom and consequent loss of perception, and then Isaiah’s temple vision. This corresponds exactly to the enigmatic history of the sixth week in the Enochic *Apocalypse of Weeks*: ‘... all who live in [the temple] shall be blinded [i.e. their eyes would be smeared over], and the hearts of all of them shall godlessly forsake Wisdom [i.e. their minds would forsake Wisdom]. And in it a man shall ascend; and at its close, the house of dominion shall be burned with fire, and the whole race of the chosen root shall be dispersed.’[59] Something in the reign of Uzziah was remembered as the rejection of Wisdom, and this memory survived not only in the Enochic history, but also in the story of Miriam being rejected after the dispute over the right to burn incense. Then Isaiah received his temple vision – the man ascending – and he learned that only when this situation was reversed, when people again saw, heard and understood, would there be restoration.

Isaiah then asked the LORD how long this state would afflict his people, and what follows is another opaque passage with several words that could once have been Asherah (Isa.6.11-13). ‘Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, And houses without men, And the land is left utterly desolate, *š^{e}māmāh* ...’ The Hebrew and Greek texts differ in nuance here, but the meaning is the same: the land is ruined to desolation, Hebrew *š’h*, or, as implied by the Greek *kataleiphthēsetai*, the land is left a desolate remnant, Hebrew *š’r*. With either reading, this is the argument of the refugees who confronted Jeremiah in Egypt 150 years later: ‘Since we left off burning incense to the Queen of Heaven and pouring out libations to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine’ (Jer.44.18). The final disaster – ‘And the LORD removes men far away ...’ (Isa.6.12a) – corresponds to Enoch’s ‘the whole race of the chosen root shall be dispersed’.

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[57] See N. Wyatt, ‘The Liturgical Context of Psalm 19’, Ugarit-Forschungen 27 (1995), pp.559–96.

[58] Babylonian Talmud *Horayoth* 12a.

[59] *1 Enoch* 93.8, R. H. Charles translation.

The rest of the verse in Isaiah can be read in two ways: 'And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land' or 'And great is the Forsaken One, *'ªzûbāh*, in the midst of the land' (Isa.6.12b). 'Forsaken One' is a title used elsewhere by Isaiah to describe the Lady who was the genius of Zion. 'Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, I will make you majestic for ever' (Isa.60.15) and 'You shall no longer be called Forsaken, *'ªzûbāh*, and your land shall no longer be called Desolate', *šᵉmāmāh* (Isa. 62.4) [the word used to describe the ruined land in the temple vision]. Both describe the city as a woman.

Isaiah described his world as a place where the established social and natural order had gone – cities waste, the land utterly desolate. This is a major theme in his prophecy. He envisaged the creation and human society bound together in the everlasting covenant, sometimes described nowadays as 'the cosmic covenant', 'and the book of Isaiah contains material of great importance for reconstructing this lost theme'.[60] Isaiah 24, which may be the work of a later disciple, describes vividly the destruction of the cosmic order: heaven and earth withering away because people had 'broken the everlasting covenant'. A curse devours the earth and the people bear their own guilt, literally 'become their own sacrifice to redress violation of the covenant'.[61] The city is desolate (Isa.24.4-5, 12). 'The picture seems to be of undoing creation and its order ... Similar language and imagery occur later in Isaiah, on the coming destruction of Edom (Isa.34.8-12). But the vastness of the destruction and the consequent loss of fertility are too great to have been caused by human agents ...'[62]

The prophet then described what would happen when wisdom was restored, reversing the situation predicted in the temple vision.

> Then the eyes of those who see will not be closed
> And the ears of those who hear will hearken.
> The mind of the rash will have good judgement ... (Isa.32.3-4)

There would be good rulers, upholding righteousness and justice – what the LORD had not found in his cherished vineyard (Isa.5.7). The temple vision oracle had predicted a desolate land and ruined cities, and so too here: 'For the soil of my people is growing up in thorns and briars ... For the palace will be forsaken and the populous city deserted ...' (Isa.32.13-14).[63] This situation would continue until ... and here we should expect the prophet

[60] R. Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1992, p.16.

[61] They become their own *'āšam*, the sacrifice that redresses *ma'al*, the treacherous act which is either sacrilege against holy things or violation of the covenant, see J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, New York: Doubleday, 1991, p.347.

[62] Murray, p.17.

[63] What some have called the 'World Upside Down', R. C. van Leeuwen, 'Proverbs 30.21-23 and the Biblical World Upside Down', Journal of Biblical Literature 105 (1986), pp.599–610.

to describe the return of the Lady. But he says that the world would be restored when the Spirit returned (Isa. 32.15), bringing back fertility to the land and good order to society. *Isaiah equated the Lady and the Spirit*, and the consequences of breaking the everlasting covenant were reversed when the Spirit returned.

The final verse of the temple vision text (Isa.6.13) has a variety of translations.[64] The NEB has: 'Even if a tenth part of its people remain there, they too will be exterminated, [like an oak or a terebinth, a sacred pole thrown out of its place in a hill shrine].' The AV has: 'But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return and shall be eaten: as a teil tree and as an oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves, so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.' The RSV has: 'And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains standing when it is felled. The holy seed is in its stump.' A more recent proposal is to divide the words differently, and read: *bmzr' qdš mṣbth*, 'in the holy garden is her stump'.[65] The problem seems to be Hebrew words that could once have been 'Asherah' or a word linked to her cult. 'And though a tenth remain in it' could be 'And Asherah will be again in it [i.e. the land]', *'śryh*, a tenth, being very similar to *'šrh*, Asherah.

Four words present significant problems: *lb'r* [RSV 'burned'], *bšlkt* [RSV 'when felled'], *mṣbt* [RSV 'standing'], and *mṣbth* [RSV 'its stump']. Of these, Emerton concluded: 'Study of the versions shows there was no uniform tradition about the meaning of Isa.vi.13. *lb'r* and *bšlkt* (or perhaps *mšlkt*[66]) were understood in different ways. So too were *mṣbt* and *mṣbth*, and none of the extant versions understands both words in the same way.'[67] Given this obscurity, the choice in translation and reconstruction must depend largely on presuppositions about the meaning. If this verse is about Asherah and not about a remnant ['the tenth'], and if the preceding verse describes a restoration – 'the Forsaken One is again great in the land' – rather than the further destruction of the 'tenth', the passage is an oracle of hope not an oracle of judgement. A great tree had been forsaken and the land was desolate, but this situation would not last forever.

There is something similar in the earliest section of *1 Enoch*, a vision of the throne followed by a vision of a great tree. On his second heavenly journey, Enoch saw seven mountains. The one in the centre was higher than all the others, and the archangel Michael explained that this was the

[64] For a detailed overview, see J. A. Emerton, 'The Translation and Interpretation of Isaiah vi.13', in *Interpreting the Hebrew Bible. Essays in Honour of E I J Rosenthal*, ed. J. A. Emerton and S. C. Reif, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp.85–118.

[65] Thus M. Dijkstra 'Yahweh, El and their Asherah' in M. Dietrich and O. Loretz, eds, *Ugarit – Ein ostmediterranes Kulturzentrum im Alten Orient …* (ALASP, 7: Műnster: Ugarit Verlag), 1995, pp.41–73, p.70.

[66] The reading in 1Q Isa[a].

[67] Emerton, p.91.

throne of the Great Holy One. It was surrounded by trees, and one of which excelled all the others in beauty and fragrance. This tree, said Michael, could not be touched by any mortal, but after the great judgement it would be transplanted to a holy place beside the temple of the LORD, and its fruit would give life to the righteous and holy, the chosen ones.[68] The tree must have been the tree of life. Immediately after this, Enoch saw a blessed place where there were trees with living branches that had sprouted from a felled tree.

Since Enoch and Isaiah have much in common, Enoch's vision of the displaced tree that would return to the temple may well reflect the same situation as Isaiah's oracle of the Asherah, the Forsaken One returning to the land. Using this criterion for choosing between the many possibilities in the present Hebrew text, and not discussing all the alternatives in isolation, what might the original have been? After the judgement, with cities in ruins and people in exile, the Forsaken One is great again in the land, and Isaiah 6.13 describes the new situation. The text must be read as an oracle of hope:

A 'And Asherah will be again in it [i.e. the land]' not 'And though a tenth remain in it'
B 'And she shall return and *be eaten*' [as in the AV] not 'it will be burned again'
C 'Like a terebinth or an oak'
D 'Asherah sends forth [her branches or her roots]'
E 'Standing alone in it [the land]' not 'whose stump remains standing when it is felled'
F 'The holy seed is in her stump'

This is consistent with other later imagery, in addition to the imagery in Enoch. The great Wisdom poem in Ben Sira 24 has Wisdom describe herself: she had a throne in a pillar of cloud, she came to the holy tabernacle in Zion and served there, she put down her roots, spread out her branches like a terebinth, and called her devotees to eat her fruits (Ben Sira 24.4, 10, 12, 15, 19). The Book of Revelation fulfils the words of Michael to Enoch: after the great judgement, the tree of life seen [again] in the holy of holies, standing by the throne, bearing fruit each month to feed the faithful Christian (Rev.2.7; 22.2). In the Hebrew Scriptures there is no record of a great tree in the temple holy of holies, but there was a 'great tree' in the sanctuary of the LORD at Shechem: 'Joshua wrote all these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a great stone, and set it up there under the oak, *'lh*, in the sanctuary of the LORD' (Josh.24.26). The pointing is *'allāh*, but this word does not mean 'oak' anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible. The translator of the Greek text read the letters as *'ēlāh*, terebinth, as in

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[68] *1 Enoch* 25.4-5.

Genesis 35.4 and Judges 6.11, 19, but the RSV translates each time as 'oak'. Pronounced as *'ālāh*, however, the word means a curse, and this may be yet another example of a 'correction' from the scribes. The great tree in the sanctuary of the LORD was a curse, just as a curse devoured the land when the covenant was broken (Isa.24.6; Jer.23.10; Zech 5.3). This abhorrence of the great tree probably accounts for the present pointing of Joshua 24.26 and the unreadable state of Isaiah 6.13.

Reading Isaiah 6.13 as an oracle of hope proposes:

- A That *'śryh*, a tenth, be read as *'šrh*, Asherah.
- B That *šbh* has its usual meaning 'she will return'; *lb'r* be understood as does the AV: 'be eaten', an infinitive construct pi'el from *b'r*, eat, consume, the meaning in Isaiah 3.14 and Isaiah 5.5.
- C That the usual reading be kept.
- D That the reading underlying the Vulgate *quae expandit ramos suos*, be followed: *mšlht*, 'send out' (roots/ branches) rather than MT *bšlkt* or 1 QIsa[a] *mšlkt.*
- E That *mşbt* be read in the light of 2 Samuel 18.18, a pillar set up as a memorial, and understood with Symmachus' *'istatai monē*, to mean 'standing alone', a reasonable translation of the rare Hebrew word that must derive from *yşb* or *nşb*, both of which mean 'stand'; and that the variant *bh* 'in it' be read rather than MT *bm* 'in them'.
- F That the usual reading be followed, but 'her trunk' rather than 'its stump'.

If the Lady and her symbols had been banished from Jerusalem, this would explain some words of Micah, presented as Isaiah's younger contemporary (Mic.4.8-10; 5.2-4), who prophesied in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Mic.1.1). The texts are not entirely clear [one wonders why] but it seems that a female figure had been driven from the city by her enemies but would return to her former power and glory and give birth to the great Shepherd of Israel. The first part of the passage addresses the temple itself, the tower of the flock: 'And you, tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Jerusalem, she shall come to you, and the former/supreme royal power shall come, the dominion of the daughter of Jerusalem' (Mic.4.8, translating literally). 'The tower of the flock' was also Enoch's name for the temple. A great broad house was built for the sheep, meaning that Jerusalem was built for the people, and a great high tower was built for the LORD of the sheep.[69] The returning exiles rebuilt the tower and set bread before it, meaning the bread of the presence, but this was not pure (cf. Mal.1.7).[70] Habakkuk, like Enoch, stood in the tower and looked out to see the future (Hab.2.1-3),[71]

[69] *1 Enoch* 89.50.
[70] *1 Enoch* 89.73.
[71] *1 Enoch* 87.3.

and the watchtower in Isaiah's parable of the vineyard was understood to be the temple (Isa.5.2).[72] The parallelism of Hebrew poetry means that 'the hill of the daughter of Jerusalem' should have a similar meaning to the 'tower of the flock', but what were they?

Modern readers usually imagine a temple built on the 'Temple Mount', as in so many recent illustrations. The 'tower' then would refer only loosely to the temple itself or perhaps its high porch. Josephus, however, who knew well the temple that was destroyed in 70 CE and also its history, gave a very different reason for its being called 'the tower'. He described a building erected on the summit and side of a steep hill, such that further land had to be built up with a retaining wall and infill, in order to extend the site. The retaining wall rose up to a great height from the floor of the Kidron valley.

> The Temple was seated on a strong hill, but the level ground on its summit originally barely sufficed for shrine and altar, the ground around it being precipitous and steep. But King Solomon, the actual founder of the temple, having walled up the eastern side, a single portico was reared on this made ground. On the other sides the sanctuary remained exposed. The [lower parts of the temple] where the foundations were lowest, they built up from a depth of 300 cubits [about 150 metres]. At some spots this figure was exceeded. The whole depth of the foundations was not, however, apparent, for they filled up a considerable part of the ravines, wishing to be level with the narrow streets of the town.[73]

This site extension is mentioned in the Bible: '[King Solomon built] the house of the LORD and his own house and the Millo [which means the filled-in piece] and the wall of Jerusalem ...' (1 Kgs 9.15). The tower of the flock was the temple built above this retaining wall that rose 150m from the valley floor. This inspired some of the images in the Song of Songs, which depicted the Lady as her temple/city:

> Your neck is like the tower of David ...
> whereon hang a thousand bucklers, all of them shields of warriors ...
> (Song 4.4)

It is usually assumed also that 'the mountain of the LORD' means what it says, but that 'the mountain of the Daughter of Zion' is just a poetic image, rather than a comparable expression. The 'hill of the daughter of Jerusalem' and 'the tower of the flock' should be read in the same way as 'the mountain of the LORD' and 'his holy place' (Ps.24.3). In other words, the daughter of Jerusalem was as much a divine figure as the LORD. Assuming otherwise

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[72] Thus R. Yosi, early second century CE, cited in Tosefta *Sukkah* 3.15.
[73] Josephus, *War* 5.185.

has created additional problems in this verse, where there are two verbs juxtaposed, both third person feminine singular, and both meaning 'come': *'th* and *bw'*. They are not an error. The first refers to the Lady – 'she will come to you' – and the second, in parallel, refers to the coming of her royal rule 'former/supreme royal power will come'. The word *r'šwn* means 'first' in both senses of the English word: former or supreme. In parallel again is 'the dominion of the daughter of Jerusalem'. Micah prophesied that the daughter of Jerusalem would return to her hill and her temple, and would again exercise her royal power. The daughter of Jerusalem/Zion was the Queen.

The second part addresses the Lady herself.

Why are you crying out [or broken in pieces]?[74]
Is there no king in you?
Has your counsellor perished,
that anguish takes hold of you like the woman in labour?
Writhe and bring forth, daughter of Zion,
like the woman in labour,
for now you are going forth from the city,
and you will be dwelling in the open country
[the next line is thought to be a later addition].
There the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies. (Mic.4.9-10)

'Writhe' is the verb *ḥwl*, which has a second meaning 'be strong/firm'; and 'bring forth' is the verb *gîḥ*, whence the name *gîḥôn*, the Gihon spring which was associated with the Lady. The daughter of Zion was promised an iron horn and hooves of bronze to defeat her enemies (Mic.4.13).[75]

Micah's other passage about the Lady describes the birth of her child, the ruler in Israel. The place of his birth, Bethlehem, was a matter of dispute, since the MT has 'he shall come forth *for me*' but one Qumran text has 'he shall *not* come forth'[76] but his role is clear: 'to stand and shepherd with the strength of the LORD, with the majesty of the Name of the LORD his God' (Mic.5.4). The Lady's son would be the man who bore the Name of the LORD, in other words the one who was Immanuel and born through the ritual now obscured in Psalm 110. This explains his origin: 'His coming forth is from ancient times, from the days of eternity/the hidden time' (Mic.5.2b, translating literally). The Lady's son would come forth from the holy of holies, which represented the state both beyond and before time, described in Psalm 110.3 as 'the glory of the holy ones/holy place'. Until the birth of the Lady's son, the people would be abandoned, but when he appeared, the rest of his brethren would return to the people of Israel.

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[74] Reading *tarō'iy roa'* instead of *tariy'iy rea'*.

[75] We shall return to this image, see below, pp.134, 157.

[76] 4QXII[f]. The difference is one letter: 'for me', *ly*, and 'not', *l'*. In the old Hebrew script, the two letters can look very similar.

These enigmatic verses in Micah are a summary of the Enochic history set out in Enoch's second dream vision. Enoch saw 'the LORD of the sheep, who stood before them, and his appearance was great and terrible and majestic ...'.[77] When the sheep lost their sight, 'he forsook the house and the tower and gave them all into the hand of [their enemies]'.[78] Finally, the LORD of the sheep returned to his throne, judged the enemies and the sheep who had lost their sight, and destroyed the old temple. A new one was built, and all who had been dispersed and destroyed assembled in the new temple. 'And the LORD of the sheep rejoiced with great joy because they were all good and had returned to his house.'[79] The Lady is not mentioned in Enoch's dream vision, but both Micah and Enoch knew that the LORD left the temple and his people long before the Babylonians destroyed the temple and scattered the people. Whatever the actual date of these words attributed to Micah, they corroborate the words of Isaiah – that the Lady, the mother of Immanuel, left the temple, and that the land and its people would be restored only when she returned. If the Micah material is 'late', a product of the second temple period, this shows that the Lady was not forgotten, and that the crisis in her history was remembered and set in the time of Isaiah. So too with the opening chapter of Proverbs, another 'late' text. Wisdom called out to her children who had rejected her. She longed to pour out her spirit upon them (Prov.1.23), but since they had rejected her, she would not help them when calamity struck (Prov.1.24-33). They would eat the fruit of their own ways, an allusion to Wisdom as the tree of life and to the snake in Eden.[80]

Isaiah's next oracles (Isa.7.3-17) address the threat from the northern kings – Rezin of Syria and Rekah of Israel – who were about to attack Jerusalem and set up a puppet king to be their ally against Assyria (Isa.7.1, 6). The oracles, probably from 735–733 BCE, are full of images of the Great Lady and allusions to her. Isaiah met Ahaz as he was inspecting the city's water supply (Isa.7.3). This came from the Gihon spring, known later as 'the Virgin's Spring', but when it acquired this name is not known.[81] The spring was the site of Solomon's coronation (1 Kgs 1.33, 38), and the Targum here changes Gihon to Shiloah, the subject of another oracle (Isa.8.6). Ahaz's son Hezekiah would later construct a tunnel to bring this water into the city (2 Kgs 20.20; 2 Chron.32.30), but Ahaz went to inspect the older, vulnerable system. Hezekiah, and doubtless Ahaz too, realised that this was the weak spot in the city's defences: '[Hezekiah] planned with his officers and his mighty men to stop the water of the springs that were outside the city ... and they stopped all the springs and the brook that flowed though the land

[77] *1 Enoch* 89.30.
[78] *1 Enoch* 89.56.
[79] *1 Enoch* 90.33.
[80] We shall return to this, see below, pp.364–74.
[81] G. A. Smith *Jerusalem*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908, 2 vols, vol.1. pp.102–7.

saying, "Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?"' (2 Chron.32.3-4).

There are few context details in Isaiah, and no mention of Ahaz sacrificing his son. The writer of Kings implies that this sacrifice was one of the sins for which he was punished when the northern kings came against Jerusalem (2 Kgs 16.1-5), but the invasion is more likely to have been the reason for the sacrifice. Mesha king of Moab, one hundred years earlier, had sacrificed his son and heir to save his kingdom. When he rebelled against Jehoram, the king of Israel to whom he owed tribute, Mesha found himself in a situation like that of Ahaz. The king of Israel joined forces with the kings of Judah and Edom to invade Moab (2 Kgs 3.9) and they routed the Moabites, destroying their cities, spoiling the land, stopping the springs and felling the trees. Mesha, realising that he was almost defeated, sacrificed his son and heir on the wall of his city (2 Kgs 3.25-7).

Ahaz faced a similar crisis, and may well have sacrificed a son before he met Isaiah and received the sign of the Virgin and child. The 'birth' of another royal son would have been an appropriate oracle. Ahaz had become king at the age of 20, and was to reign 16 years (2 Kgs 16.2), but there are problems with the dates. If Hezekiah's son was 25 when he became king (2 Kgs 18.2), it means that Ahaz was only 11 years old when his son was born. The Targum[82] remembered that the LORD saved Hezekiah from the fire that took Ahaz's sons, and, if the biblical dates and ages are even approximate, this must have been the case. Hezekiah was about 9 when his father became king, and so the Virgin and child oracle is less likely to have been about the physical birth of the royal son and heir to one of the wives of Ahaz, than to have been an assurance that the boy Hezekiah would be the next king, the next royal 'son' of the Virgin.

Ahaz was remembered for the altars on the roof of his chamber, which the kings of Judah had made, and which his son Hezekiah did not remove (2 Kgs 18.4; 23.12). When Josiah removed them, he also removed from the temple all the 'vessels' (*kēlîm*, 'things') for the host of heaven, and it is likely, as we have seen, that Isaiah made astronomical observations. The calendar, a matter for the priests, certainly required them, and the ideal temple prescribed by the *Temple Scroll* (11QT), had the eastern gates positioned such that from a central spot in the temple area, the sun at the solstices rose through the northeastern and southeastern gates.[83] The central spot for observations in this proposed temple would have been on the roof of the porch.[84] Now the Lady who gave birth to her son was later remembered as the woman clothed with the sun (Rev.12.1), and the son of the sun goddess at Ugarit was the crown prince whose heavenly counterpart was Venus. The

[82] Targum 2 Chron.28.3.
[83] See my 'The Temple Measurements and the Solar Calendar' in *Temple Scroll Studies*, ed. G. J. Brooke, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989, pp.63–6.
[84] There is a plan in J. Maier, *The Temple Scroll*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, p.146, fig.3.

prompting for Isaiah's oracle could have been the morning sky around the autumn new year in 731 BCE: just after the autumn equinox, that is, in the season of the autumn festivals, Venus passed through Virgo whilst that constellation was in the sun.[85] This would have been the sign in the heavens that the Virgin was giving birth to her royal son, Venus the Morning Star.

A startling variant reading in the great Isaiah scroll from Qumran probably preserves the original reading and thus the original context of the Virgin oracle. The Virgin was the Lady, whose son was born in the holy of holies when he became the king, the human presence of the LORD. Whereas the MT has 'Ask a sign of, *m'm*, the LORD your God' (Isa.7.11), the Qumran scroll has one different letter and reads: 'Ask a sign of the mother of, *m'm*, the LORD your God.' This is not in the Greek nor any ancient version, but the Qumran scroll is the only pre-Christian evidence for this part of the Hebrew text of Isaiah. The crucial letter has been altered either *from* 'the mother of' or *to* 'the mother of'; either way, 'the Mother of the LORD' is a significant title. Was *the* Virgin, *hā'almāh*, the mother of the LORD? Despite well known translations (e.g. AV of Isa.7.14: AV, RSV and GNB of Mt.1.23), the Hebrew and Greek of Isaiah 7.14 and Greek of Matthew 1.23 all have *the* Virgin, not *a* Virgin. This Virgin was unique and well known, and was remembered as the mother of the LORD. She was also the mother of the Shepherd of Israel, who would have the strength of the LORD and the majesty of his Name (Mic.5.4). The variant could have been a scribal correction, but since these corrections were intended to remove perceived blasphemies, it is unlikely that 'the mother' was introduced into the text. The phrase 'mother of the LORD' was, however, known to Luke, who had Elizabeth say to Mary: 'Why is this granted to me, that the mother of my LORD should come to me?' (Lk.1.43). Luke wrote this section in a liturgical style, for example the word 'exclaimed', *anephōnēsen*, was used in the LXX to describe the music of the Levites in the temple (e.g. 1 Chron.15.25; 16.4,5; 16.42). Since Elizabeth's words translate well into Hebrew poetry, they could have had a 'liturgical' context within the early Christian community, and Elizabeth may not have been the first to say: 'Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb' (Lk.1.42).[86]

The 'Virgin' was remembered by the Jews of Egypt as the correct way to translate the Hebrew *'almāh*, a word that does not always mean virgin. Presumably this community, whose refugee ancestors had protested their devotion to the Lady in response to Jeremiah's condemnation, also remembered her name and title. In the light of the evidence from Ugarit, 'Virgin' was probably a ritual term for the mother, both earthly and heavenly, of the king.

[85] I am very grateful to Dr Raymond Mercier of the University of Cambridge for answering my questions about this.

[86] For detail see my book *Christmas. The Original Story*, London: SPCK, 2008, pp.65–7. My LORD cannot have been 'My Yahweh' since the name cannot take a suffix, but she could have used the usual alternative, Adon, Lord, as this does take the suffix, 'my Lord'.

Thus Hurriya, the sacred bride of king Keret, was the *ġlmt*, the cognate of Hebrew *'almāh*, and the Sumerian goddess Nikkal ['Great Lady'] was the *ġlmt*, the sacred bride of the moon god. 'The term [*ġlmt*] was restricted to royal women and goddesses.'[87] The heavenly and human mothers are found in the New Testament, where the woman clothed with the sun gives birth to the ruler in heaven (Rev.12.1-5), and Mary gives birth on earth.

After the sign of his child named Maher-shalal-ḥash-baz, Isaiah received an oracle about Shiloah, the waters that came from the Gihon. They are contrasted with the waters of the River, the king of Assyria who will come and flood the land. Why this comparison? In Ugaritic mythology, Prince Sea and Ruler River are the two titles of the god of threatening watery chaos. Baal defeats him and drinks him, thus removing the threat.[88] Isaiah used exactly this imagery. The LORD would ride on a cloud to Egypt, and the idols would tremble, he prophesied, and then: 'The waters of the Sea will be drunk, and River will be dried up and desiccated' (Isa.19.5, translating literally). He was using imagery known at Ugarit, and the same comparison is found in the oracle about Shiloah. The many powerful waters of the River would come in the form of the king of Assyria, and flood the whole land. Why? Because the people had rejected their own gentle waters of Shiloah, and showed this by their fear of the two kings from the north. The waters of Shiloah are not just contrasted with the River because they flow gently and the River comes as a flood. Each represents a deity. The gentle waters of Shiloah, that is, the Lady, had been rejected,[89] leaving the city without protection, and so the people feared the two kings. They would soon be overwhelmed by a flood from Assyria. The Targum remembered this as contrasting the house of David, represented by the gentle Shiloah, and the king of Assyria. The Psalm of Habakkuk, which cannot be dated, has the same Ugaritic imagery, with the Lord described as the storm god battling against River and Sea (Hab.3.4-15), doing battle to save his people and his Anointed One. As we shall see, the Lady was with him.[90] Here, Isaiah does not promise help against the imminent flood. This is Enoch's history of Jerusalem; the Lord abandoned the city at this time.[91]

The order of the book suggests that Isaiah retired from public life after his encounters with Ahaz and committed his oracles to his disciples (Isa.8.16-17). The two messianic oracles, looking forward to a new king in Jerusalem, probably come from this period, and both assume the Lady and her gifts to her son. A great light dawns in the darkness of a land ravaged by war

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[87] See N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, pp.201, 337.

[88] See Wyatt, *Religious Texts*, pp.67–9.

[89] The Isaiah Targum remembered this contrast between two rulers: the people had despised the house of David, and so the LORD would bring the king of Assyria and all his armies.

[90] See below, p.115.

[91] *1 Enoch* 89.54.

as a child is born in the holy of holies. 'Unto us a child is born' (Isa.9.6) could well be the words of the angels whilst the ritual obscured in Psalm 110.3 was performed in the holy of holies. The king was 'born' and then named: 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace'. These are the familiar forms. The Targum understood that this was the prophet himself announcing a birth in the house of David: 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, He who lives forever, the Anointed One.' The LXX, however, has only one title for all four: 'The Angel of Great Counsel'. A translator in Egypt, in the third or second century BCE, knew that the divine son 'born' in the holy of holies was the angel of Wisdom, just as s/he knew his mother was called the Virgin.

The second messianic oracle (Isa.11.1-9) describes the effect of his anointing. He is described as a rod and a branch – tree imagery – growing from the stem of Jesse. The Targum understood this as 'a king from the sons of Jesse, and a Messiah from his sons' sons'. The Spirit that rests on him is the manifold Spirit of the LORD, endowing him with wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and the fear of the LORD (Isa.11.2). The Anointed One then restores right judgement, renews the harmony of the creation and fills the land [not 'earth'] with the knowledge of the LORD 'as the waters cover/clothe the sea' (Isa.11.9), thus reversing the situation described in Isaiah 8.6-8, when the waters of Assyria filled the *land*. He restores the knowledge of the LORD – not knowing the LORD, but knowing as the LORD knows. Wisdom would return.

The early Christians still knew the original significance of these words, and Jerome quoted the *Gospel of the Hebrews*[92] in his commentary on Isaiah 11.2.

> In the [*Gospel of the Hebrews*] I find this written: 'And it came to pass when the LORD was come up out of the water, the whole fount of the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon him, and said unto him: My son, in all the prophets I was waiting for thee, that thou shouldst come, and that I might rest in thee. For thou art my rest, thou art my first begotten son that reignest forever.'[93]

In his commentary on Isaiah 11.9 he also noted that in the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, Jesus spoke of 'My mother the holy Spirit.' The early Church, then, understood the manifold Spirit, which Isaiah calls 'the Spirit of the LORD', not as a Spirit from the LORD, but as the Spirit that transformed the recipient into the LORD, or, as here, the son of God who reigned forever. The Spirit was his Mother, and the imagery is from the royal cult. John's Jesus spoke in the same way, about being born from above [or born again] to be able to see the Kingdom, and being born of water and Spirit to be able to

[92] Lost apart from a few quotations in other writers.
[93] Quoted also by Origen, *Commentary on John* ii.12 and *On Jeremiah*, Homily 15.

enter the Kingdom (Jn 3.3-5). Paul taught something similar, but spoke of being 'led' rather than being 'born': 'For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God ... in order that he [Jesus the LORD] might be the firstborn of many brethren' (Rom.8.14, 29).

The manifold Spirit gave wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and the fear of the LORD. It transformed human perception and would reverse the punishment described in Isaiah's temple vision: minds and ears and eyes that could no longer understand and hear and see. The Targum described the Spirit bearer as the Messiah, and even though anointing is not mentioned in Isaiah 11, this passage does describe the effect of anointing. A line omitted by the AV and said to be an addition due to dittography,[94] describes the 'perfume' of the Spirit bearer. 'And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD' (Isa.11.3, RSV) should be 'And his perfume shall be the fear of the LORD.' The word translated 'delight', *ryḥ*, normally means perfume, and in some instances, the perfume of the anointing oil. In the Song of Songs, nard gave forth its *perfume,* and the bride's oils were more *perfumed* than any balsam (Song 1.12; 4.10). There is also the enigmatic line: 'Your good oils are as *perfume*, your name is oil poured out' [or, in the Qumran text, 'your name is like blended perfumes'[95]] (Song 1.3). Whence the comparison of perfumed oil and a name poured out? The most likely origin of this imagery is temple ritual, where anointing conferred the Name, and so the Spirit/Name bearer had the perfume of his anointing. Then he no longer judged with his own (human) eyes, and did not make decisions after hearing with (human) ears (Isa.11.3). The anointed rod from the stump of Jesse was the promised holy seed in the Tree, removing the desolation of the land that had been caused by expelling the Lady.

The gifts of the Spirit are the elements of Wisdom. Wisdom called out to those who had rejected her – in words that could well have come from the situation depicted by Isaiah: 'Turn to my way of thinking, behold I will make my Spirit flow out to you, I will make my words known to you' (Prov.1.23, translating literally). She warned what would happen if they rejected her: 'Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be sated with their own counsels' (Prov.1.31). These are images of the Lady: her spring flowing and her tree giving fruit, and the warnings are exactly what Isaiah prophesied after his temple vision. Rejecting the Lady brought its own punishment.

The gifts conferred with anointing all transformed ways of knowing and perceiving.

- The first gift to the Anointed One was 'Wisdom' *ḥkmh*, which speaks for itself.

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[94] A scribe mistakenly wrote the end of the previous line again.
[95] 6 Q Cant.

- The second and fifth gifts were 'understanding' *bynh*, and knowledge, *d't*, which were the definition of wise teaching: 'To know, *ld't*, wisdom *ḥkmh*, and instruction, understand the words of understanding, *bynh*' (Prov.1.2), translating literally.
- The third gift, counsel, could well be wordplay. 'Counsel', *'ṣh*, looks very like the word for a tree, *'ṣ*, and could be a feminine form of the word. This form *'ṣh* is found in Jeremiah 6.6, and is described as a unique example of a feminine collective noun meaning trees. In the context of the LORD's punishing Jerusalem, we find: 'Hew down *trees*, cast up a siege mound against Jerusalem' a reasonable reading, except that several ancient versions here have the same consonants pointed to read 'her tree': 'Hew down her tree, cast up a siege mound ...'[96] What tree in Jerusalem had to be cut down, and then be obscured in the text?
- The fourth gift was 'might', *g^ebûrāh*, almost the same as the title 'Great Lady', *g^ebîrāh*, usually translated queen mother (RSV, NEB, GNB) or queen (AV). 'The spirit of counsel and might' was wordplay on 'the Spirit of the Tree and the Great Lady'.
- The last gift was 'the fear of the LORD', a phrase that occurs many times in the Hebrew Scriptures, and is appropriate in this context. It is found in parallel to 'good understanding' (Ps.111.10) and in parallel to 'the knowledge of the Holy One is insight' (Prov.9.10). 'The fear of the LORD' is also found in parallel with 'knowledge' and with 'the knowledge of God' (Prov.1.29; 2.5), or as 'the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge' (Prov.1.7). 'The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life' (Prov.14.27). Now 'the fear of the LORD' may mean exactly that, but it is possible that the phrase in some instances has replaced a similar but controversial phrase, 'the *vision* of the LORD'. In Hebrew, these two words are very similar: *yr'h*, fear and *mr'h*, vision. The gifts of the Spirit would then include the greatest gift of all: the gift of vision, especially the vision of the LORD. In fact, 'vision' is a conspicuous omission from this list, since vision was the first effect of anointing. The prophecy fulfilled at Pentecost (Joel 2.28-29; Acts 2.17-18) linked the gift of the Spirit to prophecy and visions, and the high priest was anointed on his *eyelids* to symbolise this.[97] Deuteronomy denied that such a vision was possible (Deut.4.12), and so presumably would have denied Isaiah's temple vision of the throne.

The whole collection of Isaiah's prophecies was described as a vision; the prophet saw what he later proclaimed. 'The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem ...' (Isa.2.1). Other prophets

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[96] BDB, op.cit., ch.1 n.50, p.782.
[97] Babylonian Talmud *Horayoth* 12a.

received their oracles in the same way (Amos 1.1; Obad.1.1; Mic.1.1; Nah.1.1; Hab.1.1).[98] The *Parables of Enoch*[99] show the setting of such oracles: they were visions *of* the holy of holies and *in* the holy of holies, with the throne of the Holy One and the angels. The section begins: 'The second vision which he saw, the vision of wisdom ... and this is the beginning of the words of wisdom which I lifted up my voice to speak ...'[100] It seems that seeing the throne beyond the veil of the temple, and then seeing the world from that vantage point, were the key to Wisdom. The psalmist knew that when he entered the sanctuary of God he could understand the mystery of good and evil (Ps.73.1-20), and a key theme in the Qumran Wisdom texts was the *raz nihyeh*, which probably means 'the mystery of existence' or 'the mystery of becoming' that the holy of holies represented. The one who sought Wisdom was exhorted to 'Gaze upon the *raz nihyeh* and know the paths of everything that lives.'[101] 'Vision' was fundamental to Wisdom.

Isaiah describes 'the fear of the LORD' as the great treasure of Jerusalem (Isa.33.6), and this chapter is concerned with angels and heavenly visions. There are angels in the difficult text of vv.7-8: 'ambassadors/envoys of peace' *mal'ᵃkê šālôm* being more naturally read as 'angels of peace', and understood thus by LXX and Vg; and the letters *'rym* have been read as 'cities', *'ārîm*, or 'witnesses', *'ēdîm*, and later [correctly] as 'watching angels', *'irîm* .[102] Then there is the vision of the king – the fires, the heights, the king, vv.14-17, strongly suggesting the vision of the throne – and the stability of Zion is the LORD who fills her with justice and righteousness, salvation, wisdom and knowledge: 'The fear of the LORD is his [better 'her' treasure]'. Isaiah, as we have seen, has much in common with *1 Enoch*, and in the latter, the beginning of Wisdom is not the 'fear' of the LORD, but the 'vision' of the LORD. In the context of this chapter and of Isaiah's oracles as a whole, 'the vision of the LORD is her treasure' makes as much sense as the usual understanding: 'the fear of the LORD is her treasure' (Isa.33.6).

Endowed with the gifts of the Spirit, the Anointed One would then be able to restore the land, and the first section of the book ends with a hymn of thanksgiving (Isa.12.1-6). There are many voices, and it is not easy to decide who is speaking to whom. 'You will say in that day', v.1, could be addressed to a male or a female, but v.6 addresses a female person, presumably the same person. The section therefore begins and ends with the prophet speaking to a female figure, whereas in vv.3-5, the prophet addresses a group. The female is the dweller, *ywšbt*, Zion, perhaps the one who dwells in Zion, or perhaps it is Zion herself who abides or endures. The word can also mean being enthroned; the LORD is enthroned on the cherubim (Isa.37.16;

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[98] Chapter 1 is widely thought to be a later preface to the whole book, and chapter 2 the beginning of the original Isaiah collection.
[99] *1 Enoch* 37–71.
[100] *1 Enoch* 37.1-2.
[101] 4Q418.43.
[102] R. Murray, 'The Origin of Aramaic 'ir, Angel', Orientalia 53.2 (1984), pp.303–17.

Ps.99.1) and the same construction here could mean: 'Rejoice and sing, you who are enthroned in Zion.' The gist seems to be that the LORD was angry, but the anger has passed, and the Lady now rejoices that the Holy One is in her midst. This resembles Micah 4.10b, where the daughter of Zion, expelled from her city, would be rescued and restored by the LORD. Isaiah then prophesied that the people would celebrate by drawing water from the springs of salvation/deliverance/prosperity/victory. The word *yšwʿh* has a wide range of meanings. This balances the oracle in Isaiah 8.6-8, where the people rejected the waters of Shiloah and all they represented. Here, it seems, the Lady returns to protect her city, the LORD is present again in her son, the king [cf. Mic.4.9: 'Why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in you?'], and they drink again from her protecting waters.

Isaiah's oracle to Hezekiah, when the Assyrians were threatening the city, shows that the Lady had returned. Hezekiah took the envoys' letter to the temple, 'spread it before the LORD' (Isa.37.14) and prayed. The response came through Isaiah, and took the form of the LORD speaking for the Lady and acting as her champion.

> She despises you, she scorns you – the virgin daughter of Zion;
> she wags her head behind you – the daughter of Jerusalem ...
> (Isa.37.22)[103]

A jubilee prophecy follows: 'This year eat what grows of itself and in the second year what springs of the same, then in the third year sow and reap ...' (Isa.37.30). The most likely context for this was the jubilee year in 722 BCE. Assyria invaded and occupied the northern kingdom in 724 BCE and captured Samaria in 721 BCE after a long siege. This was Isaiah's oracle of hope for Jerusalem, and could have been the original situation when the Lady rebuffed the Assyrians, although the present context suggests that the oracle was given when the Assyrians threatened the city in 701 BCE, and was destroyed by 'the angel of the LORD' (Isa.37.36-37).

The Holy One

The title Holy One occurs frequently in Isaiah. It is found 3 times in the Psalms (Pss.71.22; 78.41; 89.18), 6 times in the other prophets (Jer.50.29; 51.5; Ezek.39.7; Hos. 11.9; Hab.1.12; 3.3), but 30 times in Isaiah. Of these, 14 are found in First Isaiah. 'Holy One' is characteristic of the Isaiah school; the examples in the later part of the book reflect the fusion of divine names that happened during and immediately after the exile, one practical result of the type of monotheism imposed by the Deuteronomists. In the earlier

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[103] See further below, pp.134, 193.

material, however, there is a possibility that 'Holy One' was a title for the Lady: it was 'the daughter of Zion', 'the Holy One of Israel' who rejected the proud claim of the Assyrian king (Isa.37.22-23).

The title is often found in lines where there are gender problems in the text, and usually in parallel with the LORD. There is near-contemporary archaeological evidence for divine names and titles in the time of Isaiah, which shows a similar usage. The graffiti at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, dated to the early-eighth century BCE, and the inscription in the Khirbet el-Qom tomb II from a slightly later date and only few miles from Jerusalem, all have Yahweh and Ashratah as 'parallels', with Yahweh first and then Ashratah. One Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscription reads; 'I have blessed you by Yahweh [of Samaria?] and his Asherah ... [or Ashratah]'; the other is a similar form. The tomb inscription seems to be '... I blessed Uryahu to YHWH. And from his enemies, O Ashratah, save him ...'[104] The LORD was mentioned first, and then a female figure.

It is not easy to determine the original words of Isaiah, since his oracles were expounded and expanded by later disciples, but the most startling appearance of the Holy One is in Isaiah's oracle to Hezekiah, when the Assyrians were threatening Jerusalem. Within this oracle of defiance, it is not easy to distinguish the various voices – if such there be – but the opening lines are clear:

> She despises you, she scorns you—
> the virgin daughter of Zion;
> She wags her head behind you—
> The daughter of Jerusalem.
> Whom have you mocked and reviled?
> Against whom have you raised your voice
> And haughtily lifted your eyes?
> Against the Holy One of Israel! (Isa.37.22-23)

This surely is the Lady scorning Nebuchadnezzar. 'By your servants your have mocked *the Lord*' (Isa.37.24) is not just a reference to the LORD. It could also be a reference to king Hezekiah, because the letters *'dny* can be pointed *'ªdonay*, to indicate the LORD, or *'ªdoniy*, which is a mark of respect, as in '*my Lord* the King' (Jer.38.9). Rabshakeh, the envoy of Nebuchadnezzar had referred to Hezekiah as 'your Lord/master' when he addressed his officials: 'Has my *master* sent me to speak these words to your *master* and to you [and not to the people listening on the city walls]?' (Isa.36.4-22). Rabshakeh then mocked Hezekiah and said that no kingdom

[104] Both cited by J. Day, 'Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature', Journal of Biblical Literature 105 (1986), pp.385–408, p.392. Note that they both assume the Lady's name was Asherah and explain the final '*h*' in the name as a possessive: *his* Asherah.

had withstood the might of Assyria, that his people should not trust him. Isaiah's oracle of defiance to Nebuchadnezzar follows this scene by the city walls (Isa.37.22-29): 'By your servants you have mocked the Lord' could also be read: 'By your servants you have mocked my Lord', that is, mocked the one whom the Lady had set up as king. Nebuchadnezzar boasted of his triumphs, vv.24-25, and then the Lady replied: she knew all this long before it had happened, she had planned it, but because of his arrogance against her, she would turn Nebuchadnezzar back to his own land, vv.26-29.

Immediately the Assyrian army was destroyed by plague brought by the one whom the LORD had sent. 'The angel of the LORD went forth and slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians' (Isa.37.36), and another oracle alludes to the funeral pyres.

Therefore the Lord, the LORD of Hosts,
Will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors,
And under his glory a burning will be kindled,
Like the burning of a fire.
The light of Israel will become a fire,
and his Holy One a flame;
And it [literally *she*] will burn and devour
his thorns and briers in one. (Isa.10.16-17)

There are two Hebrew words for 'flame': one masculine, *lhb*, and one feminine, *lhbh*. The form here is feminine, and so the verbs 'burn' and 'devour' could refer to the flame or to the Holy One, but why choose the feminine form of the word for 'flame'?

If Isaiah did know the Lady as the Holy One – and there is abundant evidence that he knew the Lady[105] – then we should look again at other references to the Holy One in the early oracles. The Second Isaiah fused all the ancient divine names, and so we shall examine only occurrences in the earlier texts.

They have forsaken the LORD
They have despised the Holy One of Israel ... (Isa.1.4)

This is the expected order as found in the inscriptions: the LORD and then Asherah,[106] but here it is the LORD and then the Holy One.

Let him make haste,
let him speed his work
that we may see it;

105 See above, pp.86–107.
106 As found in the Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscriptions, see below, p.156.

Let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near,
Let it come that we may know it! (Isa. 5.19)

Here the LORD is implicit: 'Let him make haste ...', again followed by the Holy One and [her?] purpose, literally 'counsel', which was associated with Wisdom (Prov.1.25, 30).

The same pairing occurs a few lines later:

They have rejected the law of the LORD of Hosts,
And have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. (Isa.5.24)

Following the oracle of the two rivers, which warns of the consequence of rejecting the Lady and her gentle waters,[107] there is a section where a word has been changed: Holy One, *qdš*, changed to conspiracy, *qšr*.[108] Isaiah received a powerful message from the LORD, warning him about the use of the title Holy One. The changed text now reads: 'Do not call conspiracy all that this people call conspiracy ... But the LORD of Hosts, him shall you regard as holy ...' (Isa.8.12-13). The original, which would make more sense, would have been: 'Do not call holy [or even Holy One?] all that this people call holy [Holy One?] ... But the LORD of Hosts, him shall you regard as holy.' Whose voice is this? Why was Isaiah *warned against* the teaching that only the LORD was to be considered holy, to be feared and dreaded. And how could the LORD become a stone of offence and a rock of stumbling, a trap to Israel and a snare to Jerusalem, such that many stumbled, fell and were broken on him, many were snared and taken (Isa.8.14-15)? Perhaps this once meant that the new teaching about the Holy One would be a rock of stumbling and the cause of disaster. This text seems to be a vestige of a conflict over the title Holy One, with an unknown voice saying the title belongs only to the LORD, and Isaiah being warned against this.

He will become a sanctuary,
a stone of offence and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel
A trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
And many shall stumble thereon:
They shall fall and be broken
They shall be snared and taken. (Isa.8.14-15, my translation)[109]

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107 See above, p.100.

108 See above, p.79.

109 The LXX had a problem with these lines, or else had a different text:
If you trust him, he will be a sanctuary for you
and you will not encounter him as a stone to make you stumble or a rock to make you fall.
But the houses of Jacob shall be in a trap and the inhabitants of Jerusalem in a hollow [presumably a pit].
Because of this, many among them shall be powerless, and they shall fall, and be shattered. Men in safety shall draw near and be taken.

Isaiah then seals up his teachings among his disciples: 'Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples' (Isa.8.16). Presumably this was the teaching derived from the call vision about abandoning the Lady and the prophecy of the Lady and her son. There follows a somewhat disjointed [fragmented?] section about the darkness and distress that will come on the land, and then a triumphant note: 'But there will be no gloom for her that was in anguish' (Isa.9.1).[110] This may be a later editorial insertion because it is not in the LXX, which is very different in this section. The major oracle that follows announces that light is returning to those in darkness, and with this light comes the birth of a child. In the Hebrew the child has the four throne titles [Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace] but the LXX gives just one: the Angel of Great Counsel.[111] The light that returns is the mother of the child; this is the sunrise and the Morning Star.

Another dispute about the Holy One is implicit in Isaiah 30.8-14: the lying and rebellious people do not want the visions of the seers or the words of the prophets; they want to hear only 'smooth things' and no more about the Holy One of Israel.

For they are a rebellious people, lying sons,
Sons who will not hear
the instruction of the LORD;
Who say to the seers, 'See not';
and to the prophets 'Prophesy not to us what is right;
speak to us smooth things,
prophesy illusions,
Leave the way, turn aside from the path,
let us hear no more of the Holy One of Israel.' (Isa.30.9-11)

Then the Holy One – and we do not know who this Holy One is – warns that rejecting Isaiah's message will bring disaster. His call vision had been to warn of the disaster that would follow rejection of the Lady, and here, as in 8.16, the warning is recorded in a book, as a witness to future generations that they had been warned (Isa.30.8). The Holy One appears in the triumphant climax to the first section of Isaiah:

Shout and sing for joy O dweller (fem.) in Zion,
For great (masc.) in your midst is the Holy One of Israel. (Isa.12.6)

Here, the Holy One is masculine, but who is the Lady in Zion who rejoices at his presence?

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[110] *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* suggests that 'her' should be 'him'. No reason is given!
[111] There are many translations in the various Greek versions, e.g. 'the Angel, the wonderful counsellor of the great council'.

A careful reading of the early history of the monarchy shows that the Lady, with her name the Holy One, Qudshu, had been in the land since the time of Solomon. In the reign of Rehoboam, a few years after his father Solomon had completed the temple, the Deuteronomist says that the people of Judah reverted to their old ways, and 'built for themselves high places and pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, and there was also *qdš* in the land' (1 Kgs 14.23-24). The Hebrew, as currently pointed, means a male prostitute, singular, a curious observation: 'There was a male prostitute in the land.' The Lxx understood it as *sundesmos*, which can mean conspiracy, or something that binds together and unites. Whatever the meaning here, it implies that the in the second century BCE, the Lxx translator's text had *qšr*, rather than *qdš*, the change that was made in Isaiah 8.12-13. Given that '*d*' and '*r*' look similar in Hebrew, and that exchanging letters was a recognised practice of the correcting scribes, this looks like their work: 'rebellion' in the land was their way of concealing and commenting on a name of the Lady. Qudshu, the Holy One, had been in the land in the time of Rehoboam.

The title Qudshu has prompted a wide range of reactions; female deities with that or a similar name were well known in the region, but in Ugarit at least, Wyatt thought there was no such deity: 'The goddess Qudshu is a modern invention.' In the Ugaritic texts, he said, *qdš* applied to El, and did not indicate a separate deity.[112] Texts that seem to describe El and Qudshu as divine parents in fact refer only to El the compassionate and holy one.[113] Others maintain that Qudshu was one of the titles of Athirat, the Ugaritic equivalent of Asherah. Thus Day, in his survey of Asherah, wrote of the Ugaritic material: 'The goddess Athirat is called on a number of occasions Qudšu ... a name meaning "holiness" or "sanctuary" ... The personification of sanctuaries in divine names is well attested among the Semites ... When we find the gods referred to as *bn qdš* ... it is therefore more natural to suppose that this should be rendered "sons of Qudšu" and not simply "sons of holiness" as some scholars translate it, given the fact that the gods were regarded as the sons of Athirat.'[114] Asherah too could mean simply a sanctuary, and thus Asherah and Qudshu would be exact equivalents.[115]

A well known representation of Qudshu is the 'Winchester Relief', a plaque found at Thebes and for a while in a collection at Winchester

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[112] N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit. The Words of Ilimilku and his Colleagues*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, p.78n.

[113] KTU 1.16.i.11, 22; Wyatt, *Religious Texts*, p.221.

[114] J. Day, 'Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature', Journal of Biblical Literature 105/3 (1986), pp.385–408, pp.388–9.

[115] M. Dijkstra, 'I have blessed you by Yahweh of Samaria' in *Only One God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah*, eds B. Becking, M. Dijkstra, M. C. A. Korpel and K. J. H. Vriezen, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001, p.41. Also M. C. A. Korpel in the same volume, p.129.

College.[116] It shows one goddess with, apparently, three names: Qudshu, ‘Anat and Astarte. She wears a rounded wig, known as a Hathor wig because it was characteristic of that goddess, and she stands naked on the back of a lion. She holds a snake in one hand and a lotus flower in the other, and she has a wide face and prominent ears, originally cow’s ears, because the cow was one of the symbols of Hathor. The top of this plaque is missing, but elsewhere the Hathor figure is crowned with horns enclosing a disc. Similar representations have been found in New Kingdom Egypt, but also in Syria and Palestine from the same period, sixteenth–eleventh century BCE. Hathor had a temple at Sinai [Serabit],[117] but archaeologists have recognised that the original Lady of Serabit was not an Egyptian goddess but a Semitic figure, named there as Ba-alat, Lady, who became identified as Hathor. Her original name was Semitic, as was the style of her temple and cult.

Some scholars have been fairly confident that Hathor/Asherah/Qudshu were the same figure, but Wiggins gave a timely warning.

> Foremost, we must keep within sight of the character of the goddesses as we know them from the texts. Asherah is not fully ‘fleshed out’, but enough of her character is evident to draw some conclusions. She is the consort of El, the high god. As such, she is the mother of the gods (not necessarily a ‘Mother-goddess’), and she suckles royal heirs ... In seeking to add to this general sketch, we must be careful when crossing cultural boundaries and bridging gaps of many years. Each culture would adapt Asherah (or any borrowed deity) to fit its own needs.[118]

Thus Hathor/Asherah/Qudshu may well have been similar to the Lady in Jerusalem; some imagery may have been the same, titles and roles may have corresponded, but with very few exceptions, the information that has survived in texts about the Lady of Jerusalem has come from those who tried to destroy her and all memory of her. Since *qdš* was one of the words that the Deuteronomists used to misrepresent the cult of Ashratah – referring to her as Asherah and her angels as prostitutes,[119] – the pillars and green trees in the time of Rehoboam may well have been linked to the Hebrew equivalent of Qudshu and her sons the holy ones, the angels. If people were telling their stories in this way, the Deuteronomist’s mysterious word *qdš*, which was part of their picture of apostasy, could well have indicated Qudshu in the land in the time of Rehoboam, and the symbols on the Winchester Relief

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[116] I. E. S. Edwards, ‘A Relief of Qudshy-Astarte-Anath in the Winchester College Collection’, in Journal of Near Eastern Studies 14 (1955), pp.49–51.

[117] See below, pp.224–9.

[118] S. A. Wiggins, ‘The Myth of Asherah: Lion Lady and Serpent Goddess’, Ugarit-Forschungen 23 (1991), pp.383–94, p.392.

[119] See below, pp.123–4.

– the lion, the snake, the lotus and the cow – *may* help to identify the Lady in Jerusalem.

The ancient poem in Deuteronomy 33, which has also received the attention of the correcting scribes,[120] has two 'names' in parallel: Qudshu and Ashratah.[121] The current Hebrew gives '[The LORD] came from the ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at his right hand' (Deut.33.2), but 'holy ones' is *qdš*, singular, and flaming fire is a rather obvious alteration of Ashratah: *'šrt* has become *'šdt*, the substitution of '*d*' and '*r*' again. The resulting Hebrew letters were then divided into *'š dt*, meaning fiery law. Thus the Vulgate has *ignea lex*, the LORD coming with the fiery law. Now *dt*, meaning law, is a Persian loan word found only in Ezra and Esther and a clue as to when the change was made;[122] and the two 'names' in parallel cannot be coincidence. The ancient poem had been about the Lady coming with the LORD, when he 'became' the king in Jerusalem, that is, when the Davidic prince became the LORD. Further, the Lady in both these examples has a name/title with a 'masculine' form: *qdš*, which means that occurrences of the title 'The Holy One of Israel' may not always refer to the LORD, and that Isaiah may indeed have known the Lady as the Holy One.

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[120] See above, p.89.

[121] M. Dijkstra 'El, the God of Israel—Israel, the people of Yahweh: On the origins of ancient Israelite Yahwism', in *Only One God?* op.cit., n.115 above, p.115.

[122] This is a Persian loan word for law, and found otherwise only in Ezra and Esther.

3

The Old Beliefs

Some Assumptions

If we are to recover what Josiah 'reformed', assumptions about the religion of the people of the Hebrew Scriptures have to be recognised and removed. Zevit observed: 'I suggest that it is productive to describe both the sites and Israelite religion as expressions of known ancient social realities. This is preferable to describing them in dichotomous terms, lacking social referents in the ancient culture.'[1] Or, as Dever observed in his study of female deities 'The real religions of ancient Judah consisted largely of everything that the biblical writers condemned.'[2] A recent volume dealing with this subject was described on its cover as '[representing] the eye of the storm in current biblical scholarship'.[3] 'Many scholars have sought to "manage" biblical and archaeological indications of religious diversities in ancient Israel and Judah by assuming a firm distinction between "popular" religion and "official" religion. But this distinction is often drawn relatively uncritically on theological grounds – which risks misrepresenting or distorting the likely religious realities of ancient Israel and Judah.'[4] The 'theological grounds' assumed here are Protestant, which have indeed often shaped the way the Old Testament is studied, but the older churches would recognise much of what is now called 'diversity' in ancient Israel, insofar as it honoured the Lady. They have always found the Lady in their liturgical use of the Old

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[1] Z. Zevit, 'False Dichotomies in Descriptions of Israelite Religion' in *Symbiosis, Symbolism and the Power of the Past. Canaan, Ancient Israel and their Neighbours from the Bronze Age through Roman Palestine*, eds W. G. Dever and S. Gitin, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003, pp.223–35, p.233.

[2] W. G. Dever, *Did God have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*, Grand Rapids and Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2005, p.291.

[3] B. Lang on the cover of *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, eds F. Stavrakopoulou and J. Barton, London: T&T Clark, 2010.

[4] Ibid., p.37, Francesca Stavrakopoulou.

Testament texts, and the current 'storm' in biblical scholarship may have results that many scholars did not expect.

Since the forbidden ways were described as idolatry, it is interesting to note Milgrom's statistics: 'The datable biblical literature of the eighth century accuses Israel of idolatry 15 times; that of the following seventh century 166 times.' Leaving aside the thorny question of 'dating' biblical literature, this simple test suggests either that there was a catastrophic apostacy during the seventh century, expressed in the condemnations found in Deuteronomy (36 times), Jeremiah (46 times) and Ezekiel (82 times); or that the definition of idolatry had changed.[5] In Isaiah, only one of the references to idolatry concerns his own time. As Milgrom observed: 'Isaiah does not call for an immediate end to idolatry ... [He] does not see paganism as a threat to YHWH.'[6] In the Holiness code, which he dated to the eighth century, idolatry was not described as a pollution, unlike necromancy and molek worship (Lev.19.31; 20.3), but in the seventh century idolatry polluted the temple, the land and the people (e.g. Jer.2.23; Ezek.20.7-31). Popular piety, Milgrom suggested, continued to practise 'idolatry' even after the great purges under Hezekiah and Josiah, but the seventh century prophets, influenced by Deuteronomy, wanted to eradicate 'idolatry' from private as well as from official practice. *There is an assumption here: that it was the prophets' attitude to idolatry that changed, rather than the definition of idolatry.*

Milgrom's evidence could just as easily be showing that Deuteronomy changed the definition of idolatry and excluded what earlier prophets had accepted. The D writers ranked the cult of the Lady with the forbidden practices of other nations and linked her to Baal. When Elijah challenged Jezebel's court prophets to the contest on Mount Carmel, it was only the prophets of Baal who were humiliated and killed (1 Kgs 18.22, 25, 40), but the prophets of Asherah are mentioned too, even though they play no part in the story. It looks as though they have been added at the beginning of the story, to associate them with the hated Jezebel and with Baal (1 Kgs 18.19). So too, when Jehu removed the signs of Jezebel's influence in Samaria, he burned the pillar of Baal and demolished his temple, but there is no mention of removing and destroying Asherah (2 Kgs 10.18-28). 'Had the Asherah been introduced by Jezebel, it is certain that every asherah in the country would have been destroyed. The conclusion must be that Jehu and the people of his time did not regard the asherah as being a non-Israelite phenomenon.'[7]

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[5] Quotation and statistics from J. Milgrom, 'The Nature and Extent of Idolatry in Eighth-Seventh Century Judah', Hebrew Union College Annual LXIX (1998), pp.1–13, p.1.

[6] Milgrom, pp.3–4.

[7] G. W. Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, Lund: Gleerup, Horae Soderblomianae 5, 1963, p.51.

It is also an assumption that the 'official' cult and private practice were different. There are material remains of the 'private' practices, but none from the official cult in Jerusalem that is different from anything in the 'private' sphere. Considerable evidence for 'private' practice – in fact, the vast majority of the evidence for any pre-exilic religion in Jerusalem and Judah – are the many small female pillar figurines that have been found, and scholarly reaction to them is an interesting story. The few discovered in the nineteenth and early twentieth century were first identified as Astartes, perhaps used in magic, or maybe as toys. As more were found, it was suggested that they represented Asherah, a consort of Yahweh, and this is now the most widely accepted theory.[8] The sharpest focus in this matter of the Judaean pillar figurines [JPFs] has been Kletter's, who observed: 'Despite the vast amount of research, the relations between the JPFs and the political borders of Judah were never adequately studied.' The JPFs are distinctive, and a map of their distribution shows that the greatest numbers have been found in Jerusalem itself and in the area round it.[9] Further, he noted, the JPFs were mostly from the eighth–seventh centuries BCE and found in almost every site in Judah. Within the heartland of Judah, 822 JPFs were discovered, about 96 per cent of the total number found, and 47.5 per cent of all JPFs were found in Jerusalem.[10] How then can one make a clear distinction between the private practice of the population in general, and the 'official' cult in Jerusalem if most of the evidence for 'private practice' was found in Jerusalem? And how can one assume that the Lady was alien to Jerusalem when the evidence shows that this was her heartland, and there is little evidence for any other religious practice there at that time?

Examples of this assumption are all too easy to find. A huge number of JPFs were found in Jerusalem in 1967 in an artificial cave on Ophel, together with domestic pots, an incense stand, and figurines of horses and riders, the horses having 'discs, presumably sun discs' on the forehead. Kenyon's initial report noted that the cave was 'notably well cut', and although it was 'impossible to be certain of the original purpose of the cave ... a strong claim can be put forward that it was a *favissa* ... of *an unorthodox cult*'.[11] Her 'strong claim' could only have been based on the Deuteronomists' prescriptions for worship in Jerusalem. Isaiah must have known these figurines, and, as we have seen, his beliefs about pure temple worship were

[8] Brief history in R. Kletter, 'Between Archaeology and Theology: the Pillar Figurines from Judah and the Asherah' in *Studies in the Archaeology of the Iron Age in Israel and Jordan*, ed. A. Mazar, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001, pp.179–216, pp.179–80.

[9] Kletter, 2001, p.186.

[10] R. Kletter, *The Judean Pillar Figurines and the Archaeology of Asherah*, Oxford: British Archaeological Reports (International Series 636), Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1996, pp.4, 10, 45, 47.

[11] K. M. Kenyon, 'Excavations in Jerusalem, 1967', Palestine Exploration Quarterly, 1968, pp.108–9, my emphases.

very different from those assumed until recently by scholars. This assumed form of temple worship was used as the template for reading his oracles. The female figure represented by the eighth and seventh century figurines was probably the Lady, struggling throughout this period to keep her place in Jerusalem.

The figurines were small, between 8cm and 14cm high, some with a mould-made head attached to a handmade body pillar, and others entirely handmade, the latter having only eye indentations to indicate the face. Some figurines found at Ramat Raḥel and Tel-en-Nasbeh in north Judaea and in Jerusalem – but nowhere else – had turban-shaped headdresses, and a few had a lamp over their heads. The body is always that of a woman holding her hands under very prominent breasts, and 199 still show traces of a white lime-wash, overpainted on the front with patterns which could be jewellery, mainly red, but some yellow, brown and black. This suggests a female figure wearing a decorated white dress, designed to be seen from the front only and so perhaps intended to stand in a niche. Most striking are the faces which are often painted red.[12] The figurines carry a disc in front of them,[13] which has been identified as a shield or a drum or a loaf of bread, but the small size makes a loaf the most likely. Some are decorated with a cross or with a pattern round the edge. In many cases, the JPFs were found together with sun-horse and rider figurines, and in a few cases, with bird figurines, possibly doves.

The figure presented by the JPFs is assumed to be one of the goddesses known elsewhere; originally she was identified as Astarte, and more recently as Asherah. But this assumes there was no Lady native to Jerusalem, with her own cult and style, and her own name. 'It seems that the JPFs are indeed a representation of the OT Asherah: this is the most logical explanation. On the other hand, the JPFs are not exactly identical with Asherah. This was the belief of many scholars, who treated the two as equal.'[14] Since Asherah is likely to be the name given by her detractors – the D writers and editors – the JPFs *represent what her detractors called 'Asherah'*.

If the figurines represent a goddess unique to Jerusalem and Judah, the distinctive style of the JPFs should reflect what is known about the Lady of Jerusalem from other sources. The refugees in Egypt told Jeremiah they had worshipped the Queen of Heaven in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem (Jer.44.17), and that is where the figurines have been found. Some of the figurines found in and around Jerusalem have a turban, such as the high priest wore; and Ezekiel, himself a temple priest (Ezek.1.3) saw an angel high priest, *apparently a female or male-female figure,* being thrown from the holy mountain (Ezek.28.12-19).[15] Ben Sira, whose name, according

[12] Kletter, 1996, p.50.
[13] One, no. 232, carries a small child.
[14] Kletter, 2001, p.204.
[15] See below, pp.342–60.

to a sixth century CE Syriac text was Bar 'Asira, *son of Asira*,[16] remembered Wisdom as an angel high priest in Jerusalem, who came from the assembly of the Most High to serve in the holy tabernacle on Zion (Ben Sira 24.2, 10). The figurines had red faces, and the figure whom Ezekiel saw leaving the temple was the fiery 'Living One'.[17] The figurines wore white garments, and the women of Jerusalem wove linen garments for the Lady (2 Kgs 23.7). Many JPFs had only one facial feature: huge eyes. Wisdom opened eyes, and the *Apocalypse of Weeks* remembered that those who abandoned her lost their sight.[18] The most prominent feature of the JPF was her breasts, emphasised by the position of her hands, and the most obvious meaning of the ancient title El Shaddai is 'God with breasts'.[19] Ezekiel heard the voice of Shaddai when the Living One left the temple (Ezek.1.24; 10.5); presumably she was Shaddai.[20] The figurines went out of use before the Persian period 'most likely around 586 BCE'.[21] All the features of the JPFs suggest that she was the Lady of Jerusalem whom Josiah banished.

Another widespread assumption is that Asherah was the *consort* of Yahweh. The inscriptions at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, which seem to read: 'I bless you by *yhwh* of Samaria and by *'šrth*' and 'I bless you by *yhwh* of Teman and '*šrth*',[22] and other inscriptions where the form *'šrth* occurs have been much discussed, and the general conclusion is that the form *'šrth* means 'his Asherah'. A personal name taking a pronominal suffix, however, 'is nowhere attested in Hebrew itself, so it is more natural to see a reference to the Asherah cult object' that is, to a wooden pole.[23] This pole in some way represented the consort of Yahweh: 'This becomes a near certainty when we recall that in Canaanite religion Asherah was the consort of El and that the Old Testament equates Yahweh and El.'[24] Now this may well be true of some people in the post-Josianic period, but Asherah was part of the life of Judah and Jerusalem before Josiah and the Deuteronomists, and so *before El and Yahweh were conflated*. As Eissfeldt observed in his study of the relationship between El and Yahweh,[25] the examples of Yahweh appropriating the epithet El 'to which he was not originally entitled' are found mainly in the Second Isaiah (e.g. Isa.43.13; 45.22), the prophet who

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[16] Peshitta Codex Ambrosianus.
[17] See below, pp.247–8.
[18] *1 Enoch* 93.8.
[19] D. Biale, 'The God with Breasts. El Shaddai in the Bible', History of Religions 21 (1981–2), pp.240–56.
[20] See below, p.246.
[21] Kletter, 2001, p.185.
[22] Items 8.017 and 8.012 in vol.1 of G. I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions. Corpus and Concordance*, 2 vols, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 and 2004.
[23] J. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000, p.51.
[24] Day, p.60.
[25] O. Eissfeldt, 'El and Yahweh', Journal of Semitic Studies 1 (1956), pp.25–37, p.27.

proclaimed the monotheism that the Deuteronomists imposed and who declared that El was Yahweh.[26]

Before Josiah and Deuteronomy, however, when Yahweh assumed all the ancient roles and titles of El, Asherah would have been the consort of El, and Yahweh would have been the son of El and his consort. Asherah/the Lady was the mother of Yahweh, as the Qumran reading of Isaiah 7.11 shows, 'the Mother of the LORD' – and Yahweh was appointed as the guardian of Jacob, one of the sons of El, according to the Qumran text of Deuteronomy 32.8-9 and the very similar LXX. No mother of the sons of El is mentioned, and in the MT the sons of El became the sons of *Israel*. The evidence for the older myth was obscured.

> When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,
> when he separated the sons of men,
> he fixed the bounds of the peoples
> according to the number of the sons of God.
> For Yahweh's portion is his people ... (Deut.32.8-9a, as in 4QDeut^{j})[27]

Note that this is a 'corrected' text: in the MT the sons were unmentionable and so was the Lady.

The Hebrew Scriptures remember that the Lady had the title 'handmaid',[28] *'āmāh*. The great Lady of the court was her human manifestation, and her son was the Servant, *'ebed*, the king who was the human manifestation of Yahweh the Firstborn. The status of his mother was crucial to the king's claim to the throne. Thus 'your servant' and 'the son of your handmaid' were synonymous (Pss.86.16; 116.16). In Psalm 116, (in Book V, so perhaps a late psalm) the psalmist is addressing Yahweh, and the titles may have lost their original context, but Psalm 86 (in Book III)[29] is set, like Psalm 82, in the world of the the ancient *'^{e}lohîm*: 'There is none like thee among the *'^{e}lohîm*', 'Adonai', v.8. The psalm is attributed to David, and he prays to 'merciful and gracious El', v.15: 'Give strength to thy servant, and save the son of thy handmaid.' Given the freedom with which later scribes changed the divine names – in this psalm alone there are variant names in vv.8, 9, 12, 15, all having Yahweh instead of Adonai – it is not possible to know which divine name was originally associated with the handmaid, the king and his mother. 'Son of the handmaid', *bn amt*, however, was the designation of the king in Ugarit, the queen mother being the human counterpart of Athirat the consort

[26] See my book *The Older Testament*, London: SPCK, 1987, pp.161–83.
[27] This text has been much altered in transmission, for example to give 'sons of Israel' instead of 'sons of God'.
[28] As did Mary, the mother of Jesus, Lk.1.38, see volume 2.
[29] Book III has many psalms with themes like Jeremiah and Lamentations, which may reflect the period after 597 BCE, the first destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

of El.[30] Glimpses of the royal court in Jerusalem suggest that Bathsheba had the status of 'handmaid', and this was the basis of her son Solomon's claim to the throne (1 Kgs 1.13, 17). She was held in great honour, greater perhaps than her son: 'So Bathsheba went to King Solomon ... And the king rose to meet her and worshipped her;[31] then he sat on his throne, and had a throne set for the mother of the king and she sat at his right hand' (1 Kgs 2.19, translating literally[32]). Here is the ancient pattern: the Lady – the mother of the king – at the right hand of the Lord – the Davidic king, just as in the Blessing of Moses (Deut 33.2), and in the later prayer of Solomon for the gift of Wisdom: 'Give me the Wisdom that sits by thy throne, and do not reject me from among thy servants, for I am thy slave and the son of thy handmaid ...' (Wis.Sol.9.4-5, my translation). Bathsheba appears also in the Song of Songs, and we glimpse another of her roles: 'Behold King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding ...' (Song 3.11). Since the royal marriage ensured the succession, the great lady of the court was in effect presiding at the marriage of her successor.[33]

Thus the Lady in Jerusalem was the *mother* of Yahweh rather than the spouse, as is usually assumed. The great Lady of the polygamous Jerusalem court was the queen mother, and it would seem, from the words of Jeremiah, she was of equal status with the king: 'Say to the king and the great lady, abase yourselves and sit, for the crown of your [plural] glory has come down from your [plural] head' (Jer.13.18). It was the queen mother who had a special devotion to Asherah,[34] and if her son the king was the earthly manifestation of Yahweh, then she would have been the earthly counterpart of his mother, the Lady. This explains the Qumran reading of Isaiah 7.11, 'a sign from the Mother of Yahweh ...', which a scribe has tried to alter; and it explains the form of words in the Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscriptions. 'I bless you by *yhwh* of Samaria and by *'šrth*' and 'I bless you by *yhwh* of Teman and *'šrth*', since Yahweh in each case is defined by a particular locality, whereas Asherah has no further definition. She is the mother of the Yahweh of Samaria and the Yahweh of Teman. This becomes even more likely if the Lady's name was not Asherah but Ashratah,[35] and if the form of the name at Kuntillet 'Ajrud does not mean '*his* Asherah', but simply Ashratah. All the

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[30] KTU 1.14 ii 3, iii.25, in Wyatt, op.cit., ch.2 n.10 above, p.185.

[31] The same verb in 1 Chron.29.20 is translated 'worshipped' the LORD. The LXX has 'kissed her'.

[32] Many English versions, e.g. AV, RSV, JB, assume that the king sat on a throne and his mother on a seat, but the same word is used for both pieces of furniture. The inferior status of the mother is *read into* the text.

[33] See N. Wyatt, *'There's such Divinity doth Hedge a King'. Selected Essays of Nicolas Wyatt...* Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005, pp.8–10, citing G. W. Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, Lund: (Horae Soderblomiae 5), 1963.

[34] See above, pp.79–81.

[35] Suggested by e.g. Z. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel. A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches*, London: Continuum, 2001, p.361.

examples of the name in ancient Hebrew inscriptions have this Ashratah form,[36] and *inscriptions will not have passed through the hands of editors*. This suggests that the form 'Asherah' in the Hebrew Scriptures is the work of 'correcting' scribes, just as associating her with Baal was designed to discredit her. Further, not all the inscriptions have Yahweh preceding *'šrth*, another reason why '*his* Asherah' is not likely to be the correct meaning.

Another assumption is that Yahweh had always been the supreme male God, something that has seriously hindered and distorted the reconstruction of the older ways. The Old Testament is invariably read by Christians nowadays as an account of the work of Yahweh whom they came to call God the Father, even though scholars have long recognised that in the earlier period of Israel's religion, the supreme God was named El. Now El does appear occasionally in the Hebrew Scriptures, for example as El Elyon, begetter of heaven and earth, whose priest was Melchizedek (Gen.14.18-20); or as the father of the sons of God to whom the various nations were allocated (Deut.32.8, a 'corrected' text). Most of the Hebrew Scriptures, however, are concerned with Yahweh, one of the sons of El, who was the guardian deity of Israel. Even as late as Philo he was described as 'the second God'. The Christians knew the older beliefs and so they read the Hebrew Scriptures as testimony to the pre-incarnation appearances of Yahweh the Son of God Most High.[37] According to John, this is how Jesus read the Hebrew Scriptures: '[The scriptures] bear witness to me' (Jn 5.39); and the ancient theophanies were appearances of the pre-incarnate LORD: 'Isaiah saw his [Jesus'] glory and spoke of him' (Jn 12.41). The early Christians also knew, as we shall see, that the current manifestation of the Lady of Jerusalem was Mary his mother.[38] Jesus as the incarnation of the LORD who existed from the beginning – 'the eternal generation of the Son' – is fundamental Christian teaching and true to the older Hebrew tradition.

It is important to distinguish between the various divine sons; there were the sons of El/*'ᵉlohîm*/*'elim* and there were the sons of Yahweh.[39] The sons of El/*'ᵉlohîm*/*'ēlîm* were heavenly beings, and the sons of Yahweh were human. Yahweh was one of the sons of El Elyon, and Jesus was described in the same way: son of God Most High (Lk.1.32; Mk 5.7). Jesus was Yahweh, and this became the fundamental Christian proclamation: 'Jesus is LORD' (1 Cor.12.3). The New Testament never calls him the son of Yahweh, that is, the son of the LORD. The Hebrew Scriptures also mention the sons of *'ᵉlohîm* (e.g. Job 1.6; 38.7), and the sons of *'ēlîm* (e.g. Ps.29.1), mighty angels who had to acknowledge the precedence of Yahweh, because he was the firstborn of the sons of El. When Paul taught that the Christians were the new sons

[36] In Davies, op.cit., n.22 above.
[37] See my book *The Great Angel. A Study of Israel's Second God*, London: SPCK, 1992, passim.
[38] See my book *Christmas: the Original Story*, London: SPCK, 2008, passim.
[39] Ibid., pp.4–11.

of God, and that Jesus was the firstborn among many brethren (Rom.8.14, 29), he was using the old pattern to describe the Church.

The 'sons of God' had always been understood as angels until the advent of Christianity. 'As far back as we can go in the exegetical tradition of Gen.6:1-4, *bny 'lhym* are taken as angels.'[40] All this changed in the mid-second century CE, when Rabbi Simeon ben Yoḥai said that the term meant 'the sons of nobles' and cursed all those who said the phrase meant 'sons of God'.[41] The various Targums also point to this change in interpretation: Onkelos and Neofiti have the same understanding as R. Simeon, but the Neofiti margin and additions in Pseudo-Jonathan know the ancient angels and seem to represent the older Palestinian understanding.[42] *The aversion to 'sons of God' at this precise time must have been a reaction to Christian claims.*

The 'sons' of Yahweh, on the other hand, are never called by that name; it is always by implication and they are always human. 'You are my son' says Yahweh to the king (Ps.2.7), and the king's heirs would also be sons of Yahweh (2 Sam.7.14; 1 Chron.28.6). Sometimes the whole people was called the firstborn of Yahweh (e.g. Exod.4.22). The whole family of Yahweh, sons and daughters, would be gathered in (Isa.43.6), and for Deuteronomy, the sons of Yahweh would be distinguished by their observance of all his laws (Deut.14.1).

How the human being achieved the status of son of Yahweh is not clear. Adoptionism and other modern terms are not helpful since they derive from a totally alien culture. It was not by natural birth, since David was told that his son would become the son of Yahweh (2 Sam.7.14). In the case of the king, it was through his 'birth' in the holy of holies, when he was anointed with 'dew' and the LORD declared to him: 'You are my son, Today I have begotten you' (Ps.2.7). The process was described in the much mutilated words of Psalm 110.3-4 which once read, approximately: 'With dew from the Womb I have begotten you as the Morning Star ... You are a priest for ever in the place of Melchizedek.' The 'son of Yahweh' then, was Yahweh's human manifestation as the Melchizedek high priest. His mother is concealed in the word 'Womb', *rḥm*, which strongly resembles the name of the Ugaritic mother goddess Rahmay, who was an aspect of the sun goddess. In the New Testament she is more familiar as the Spirit: those born of the Spirit are the sons of God, the younger siblings of Yahweh (Rom.8.14, 29).

The description of Melchizedek in Genesis 14 is yet another altered text. Melchizedek according to the MT, was priest of Yahweh El Elyon, an otherwise unknown combination of names. The MT of Genesis 14.22

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[40] P. S. Alexander, 'The Targumim and the Early Exegesis of the "Sons of God" in Genesis 6', Journal of Jewish Studies 23 (1972), pp.60–71, p.61.
[41] Ibid., citing *Genesis Rabbah* XXVI.5.
[42] Alexander, p.71.

and the Targums based on it, however, are the only ancient evidence for the conflated and unique form Yahweh El Elyon as the name of Melchizedek's God. The Lxx has God Most High, the *Genesis Apocryphon* from Qumran has God Most High,[43] Josephus says Melchizedek was a priest of God, with no further detail,[44] Philo says that Melchizedek was high priest of God Most High,[45] and there is a gap in the text of *Jubilees* where we should expect to find Melchizedek.[46] The MT has therefore 'lost' the evidence for El and Yahweh as separate deities, Father and Son. Philo knew that some people in his time were confusing or conflating God Most High and the Second God whom he called the Logos: 'Some regard the Image of God, his Angel the Logos, as his very self.'[47] This suggests that Philo would have thought the conflation of Yahweh and El Elyon an error in the Hebrew text of Genesis 14, had he known it. The conflation of El Elyon and Yahweh was necessary to obscure the fact the two had formerly been distinct, and that Melchizedek, the high priest of God Most High, was the human manifestation of Yahweh.

All three of these texts – Deuteronomy 32.8, the sons of El Elyon, Psalm 110.3, the birth of Melchizedek, and Genesis 14.22, the name of Melchizedek's God – have been 'corrected', showing clearly the agenda of the 'correctors'. It was to conceal the significance of the earlier divine names, the mysteries of the holy of holies, the birth of one who was Yahweh manifest as Melchizedek, and the very existence of the divine Mother. Just as El and Yahweh have been conflated in the way the Hebrew Scriptures are usually read, so too it is assumed that divine names such as El and Holy One were always names for Yahweh. All the names did eventually come to Yahweh, but as Eissfeldt observed of the name El, Yahweh appropriated a name 'to which he was not originally entitled'.

Shaddai

'The biblical authors used an archaic deity (still worshipped, however, in Arabia at the time of their writing) according to their purpose; they do not testify to an ancient or widespread cult of that deity among tribal Israelites or Judaeans, and they contribute little to our knowledge of the nature of that deity before it entered the literary process. That much is clear from the erroneous etymologies involved in the puns employed by these authors ...'[48]

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[43] 1Q20.22.
[44] *Antiquities* 1.10.2.
[45] *Abraham* 235.
[46] There is an obvious gap in *Jubilees* 13.25, in both the Ethiopic and the Syriac texts.
[47] *On Dreams* I.239.
[48] E. A. Knauf 'Shadday' in *A Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. K. van der Toorn, Bob Becking and P. W. van der Horst, Leiden: Brill, 1995, pp.749–53.

This is a very recent authoritative pronouncement on Shaddai, and were it correct, we could proceed no further. But in fact we can go a lot further, even if with rather less confidence.

There are many difficulties trying to identify and describe the Lady of ancient Jerusalem. Robertson Smith, for example, observed: 'So far as I can make out, every Semitic goddess concentrated in herself all possible divine characters and functions',[49] and the Winchester Relief depicts a naked female figure riding a lion who has three names Qudshu [i.e. Asherah], 'Anat and Astarte.[50] There is also the female figure found at Beth-Shan: 'The Canaanite warrior goddess Antit [Anat] ... dressed as Ashtoreth, with whom she is therefore to be identified.' The text on the stela reads: 'Antit the Queen of Heaven, the mistress of all the gods.'[51] There are many examples to show that the various female figures were not always distinct. Nor must we forget that time and distance were as great in the late bronze and iron ages as they are today, and the great gaps of both time and distance cannot be simply overlooked. The Ugaritic evidence, for example, although from near neighbours of ancient Israel, shows how things had been some three centuries before the Lady in Jerusalem in the first temple era, and should be used with caution. Barr warned against generalisations about mythology, and his words are relevant to the quest for the Lady:

> Myth has to be seen as a totality within the relevant cultural group ... It is a totality first of all because mythological thinking is a striving for a total world view, for an interpretation or meaning of all that is significant ... Egyptian mythology, for example, has its insights into the configuration of the land of Egypt, the nature of truth and the dealings of the gods with one another and with men ...[52]

Wiggins too, writing about Asherah:

> A very basic methodological question is at issue here. Are we able to take a mythological character across hundreds of miles and hundreds of

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[49] W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, Second and Third Series*, ed. J. Day, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995, p.91.

[50] First published by I. E. S. Edwards, 'A relief of Qudshu-Astarte-Anath in the Winchester College Collection', Journal of Near Eastern Studies 141 (1955), pp.49–51; P. L. Day in *A Dictionary of Deities and Demons*, op.cit., n.48 above, pp.40–1 observed 'for pre-Hellenistic times ... only the Winchester Relief provides possible evidence for the actual merging of North west Semitic goddesses in Egypt'.

[51] A. Rowe, *The Topography and History of Beth Shan*, vol.1, Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1930, p.32.

[52] J. Barr, 'The Meaning of "Mythology" in relation to the Old Testament', Vetus Testamentum IX (1959), pp.1–10, p.3.

> years and assume that no change has transpired? It is more likely that figures were adopted to fit the needs of the receptor culture.[53]

The situation at Ugarit will have been different from that in Judah and Jerusalem, even though they spoke a related language, but despite all this, some traces of the Lady can still be found in the older strata of the Hebrew Scriptures, for example where the names Shaddai and Eloah occur, and to these we now turn: first, to Shaddai.

Shaddai is often translated 'Almighty' and assumed to be a title for the LORD, which is what it later became. Ancient evidence,[54] however, suggests that it had formerly been something very different. Shaddai was both male and female, just as the *'elohîm* of Genesis 1.26 must have been both male and female to need a male and a female as the image. When Ezekiel saw the cherubim who were the Living One[55] leaving the temple, he heard a noise like the sound of El Shaddai (Ezek.10.5; Shaddai at 1.24), and despite many English translations, that Living One was a female figure.[56] The form of the name used by the priestly writer in the Pentateuch is El Shaddai,[57] but elsewhere, and in the vast majority of examples, the form is just Shaddai.[58] El Shaddai in the priestly writings [Ezekiel was a priest too] may be evidence of losing the feminine aspect of Shaddai, but the majority of instances of Shaddai are in Job, where the name is found alone, or in parallel with both El and Eloah: El Shaddai and Eloah Shaddai.

'Shaddai' personal names are found in priestly material in the Hebrew Scriptures, but none is compounded with *'ēl* or *yhwh*, suggesting that Shaddai was neither El nor Yahweh, but a deity in his/her own right. There was a man of the tribe of Reuben named Shedeur, *šedî'ûr*, meaning Shaddai is a light, (Num.1.5; 2.10; 7.30, 35; 10.18; light being a feminine noun), whose son was named Elizur, *'elîṣûr*, God is a rock; there was a man of the tribe of Simeon called Zurishaddai, *ṣûrîšaddāy*, meaning my rock is Shaddai (Num.1.6; 2.12; 7.36, 41; 10.19; rock being a masculine noun)[59] whose son was Shelumiel meaning my peace is El; and there was a man of the tribe of Dan named Ammishaddai, *'ammîšaddāy*, meaning Shaddai is my kin/ ancestor (Num.1.12; 2.25; 7.66,71; 10.25) whose son was Ahiezer, meaning my brother is help. Since the sons were all tribal leaders in the time of Moses, all the three Shaddai names belonging to their fathers represent the last generation before Moses. *The priestly writer was consistent in representing*

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[53] S. Wiggins, 'The Myth of Asherah: Lion Lady and Serpent Goddess', Ugarit-Forschungen 23 (1991) pp.383–94, p.392.
[54] See below, p.130.
[55] See below, p.247.
[56] See below, p.265.
[57] 6 times plus Gen.49.25, a poem.
[58] 41 times plus Job 19.29 if that is to be read as Shaddai.
[59] The association of Shaddai and 'Rock' is significant, see below, p.138.

Shaddai as a name from the pre-Mosaic period, the name superseded by Yahweh.

Exodus 6.3 is a priestly passage where the saga of the patriarchs was joined to the saga of Moses, in other words, the point where the newly dominant Moses material superseded the older faith in the time of Josiah. Here, Shaddai, the deity of the patriarchs was explicitly renamed by the priestly writer as Yahweh, and Shaddai's role of the bestower of land was transferred to Yahweh. *The priestly writer makes clear that Yahweh superseded Shaddai.* In the earlier texts it was Shaddai who had made the covenant with Abram (Gen.17.1-8), changed his name to Abraham, promised him the land – presumably it was Shaddai's to give – and promised him descendents 'for an everlasting covenant' (Gen.17.7). Isaac had called on Shaddai to bless Jacob with descendents and the land (Gen.28.3-4), and Shaddai had appeared to Jacob, changed his name to Israel and promised him descendents and the land (Gen.35.11-12). The command to Adam was very similar to the promise of Shaddai: that he had to be fruitful and multiply [which can also mean to be beautiful and glorious[60]], and that he had to subdue the earth, which implies maintaining the bonds of the everlasting covenant, Shaddai's covenant.[61] When the Moses material was added to the saga of the patriarchs, the LORD told Moses that he had made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to give them the land, but that he had made it *under another name*: El Shaddai (Exod.6.3-4). The everlasting covenant as the covenant with Shaddai will prove to be a significant theme, as will circumcision, the sign of the everlasting covenant.

Shaddai and El Elyon inspired the diviner Balaam the son of Beor, and they are introduced twice with the same formula: 'The oracle of him who hears the words of El, who knows the knowledge of the Elyon [the Most High], who sees the vision of Shaddai, falling down, but having his eyes uncovered' (Num.24.16, my translation; also 24.3-4).[62] *El Elyon and Shaddai are not necessarily the same deity.* Balaam spoke about El (Num.23.8, 19, 22, 23; 24.8) and declared that no magic had power over those whom El had blessed (Num.23.8, 20, 23). Shaddai granted visions – recall that the pillar figurines had huge eyes – and so Balaam saw a future star rising from Jacob, and a sceptre (LXX 'man') from Israel, enigmatic words that were later understood as prophecies of the Messiah (Num.24.17).[63] He prophesied the coming of a mighty king, just as Shaddai had promised the patriarchs that their descendents would be kings (Gen.17.6; 35.11).

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[60] See below, p.335.

[61] See my book *Creation. A Biblical Vision for the Environment*, London: T&T Clark, 2010, pp.214–15.

[62] The shorter form, v.3, lacks 'knows the knowledge of the Most High'. The LXX rendered 'falling down' as 'in dreams'.

[63] Instead of 'water shall flow from his buckets' LXX Num.24.7 has 'there shall come forth a man from his seed, and he shall be LORD over many nations ...' a linked prophecy.

Balaam son of Beor, a seer who received night visions from El, is also mentioned in an ink inscription that was found in 1967 on a wall at Deir Alla and dated variously from the ninth–seventh century BCE. In other words, it was written during the time of the first temple. Like the biblical Balaam, who was associated with Mount Nebo (Pisgah, Num.23.14), the Deir Alla inscription was found east of the Jordan, somewhat north of Mount Nebo. Mount Nebo was in the territory of Reuben, one of whose leaders was, as we have seen, named 'Shaddai is light'. The Deir Alla text is damaged and reconstructions vary; they are designated Combination I and Combination II. The first mentions two deities: El is the chief god, and there is another feminine deity whose name begins with *š/ś*, pronounced sh or s. These two letters were written in the same way. Several names have been suggested, 'but one would expect a better known goddess for the central deity in our text'.[64] Since this is a Balaam vision, the most likely name is Shaddai, and so this inscription could support the theory that Shaddai was known as a female deity.

Two groups of heavenly beings are mentioned in the text: *'lhn* and *šdyn*, of which the former correspond to the *'elohîm* of the Hebrew Scriptures. The others look like the *šēdîm* (Deut.32.17) to whom children were sacrificed (Ps.106.37), and to the *šaddîn* of Job 19.29: '... for the poison/fury, *ḥmh*, of iniquities is the sword, that you may know *šaddîn*', although there are problems with the pointing of this word. This is very similar to Shaddai's arrows of poison, *ḥmh*, parallel to the terrors of Eloah (Job 6.4). The usual translation of *šdym* is 'demons', even though the corresponding Assyrian word *šêdu* means a protecting spirit. Just as the *'lhn* relate to El, presumably as their father, so too, the *šdyn* would have related to Shaddai. Combination I then seems to describe a state of chaos – vultures sing and their intended prey reproaches them, sheep lead the staff, and a poor woman has myrrh: 'This whole series of statements describes a state in which people, animals, even inanimate objects are no longer conforming to normal, natural patterns. This is why the gods are petitioning the goddess to seal up the heavens ...'[65] The pieces of Combination II are larger and better preserved, and the text is thought to describe a child sacrifice to restore fertility to the land. The implication of this text is that Shaddai was associated with child sacrifice, fertility and good order in the creation.

It seems that in the biblical tradition, Shaddai's child sacrifice was replaced by circumcision, which was the sign of Abraham's everlasting covenant with El Shaddai. In the earliest laws, firstborn sons and firstborn animals had to be sacrificed eight days after birth (Exod.13.2; 22.29-30), but there were also provisions for redeeming or offering a substitute for human children

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[64] J. A. Hackett, *The Balaam Text from Deir 'Alla*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 31, Chico CA: Scholars Press, 1980, p.41.
[65] Ibid., p.46.

(Exod.13.13; Num.18.15-18). One substitute was circumcision. The link between circumcision and fertility is clear from the El Shaddai covenant: Abraham would father a 'multitude of nations' and the sign of this promise was circumcision to be performed when the baby boy was eight days old, the time of the child sacrifice (Gen.17.4-14).

When Abraham was tested and told to sacrifice Isaac, the present text, Genesis 22, is a conflation of Yahwist and Elohist material, to use the old classification. It is not priestly. Had a priestly writer written this text, the deity who demanded the sacrifice of the 'beloved'[66] son Isaac would have been El Shaddai (Gen.22.2). When the story was incorporated into the post-Josianic Genesis, it was God, *'elohîm* who tested Abraham and the [angel of the] LORD, *yahweh*, who spoke to him on Mount Moriah. The story was also expanded with another speech from heaven (Gen.22.11-14) which detaches easily from the present text and changes the story into its present form. Reading without these verses, Abraham took the knife to kill Isaac, and then the divine voice said: 'Because you have done this and not withheld your son your only son ... I will indeed bless you and I will multiply your descendants ...' – the words of the Shaddai covenant. A ram was offered as a substitute for Isaac, just as a substitute for human sacrifice was prescribed in the Law of Moses.

Traces of the older story of the Shaddai sacrifice did survive. Abraham returned to Beersheba without Isaac, travelling with just his two servants (Gen.22.19); where was Isaac? Targum Pseudo-Jonathan also remembered that Isaac had been killed, because it explained the Genesis text thus: 'The angels on high took Isaac and brought him into the school of the Great Shem, and he was there for three years.' The wall painting in the Dura Europos synagogue shows Isaac, after the sacrifice, passing through a curtain into a hidden place, that is, into heaven; and Ephraim of Bonn told how Abraham sacrificed Isaac, and a river of heavenly tears then swept him into Eden.[67] Christian sources also knew that Isaac was sacrificed. Hebrews implies that Isaac was sacrificed: '[Abraham] considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence figuratively speaking, he did receive [Isaac] back' (Heb.11.17-19); so too the *Letter of Barnabas*: '... in time to come [God] would be sacrificing the vessel of his Spirit for our sins, whereby the type created in Isaac, when he was sacrificed on the altar, would find fulfilment';[68] and Irenaeus: 'since indeed Abraham did with a ready mind give up his only begotten and beloved son for a sacrifice to God ...'.[69] At the very heart of

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[66] 'Beloved' represents the Hebrew *yaḥid*, sometimes translated into English as 'only', but in all instances except Ps.25.16, the LXX translated by *agapētos*, beloved.

[67] Ephraim died in 1200 CE. The poem is found in T. Carmi, *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981, pp.379–84.

[68] *Letter of Barnabas* 7.

[69] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.5.

Christianity is the sacrifice of the firstborn. The ancient Shaddai was long remembered, and the demand of child sacrifice cast a long shadow way beyond the era of the first temple.

There have been several proposals for the meaning of Shaddai, but the variety found in the Greek versions shows that by the time they were translated, the original meaning was no longer known. The post-Christian Jewish translations of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek [Aquila, Theodotion, Symmachus] have *'ikanos*, 'sufficient', like the rabbinic etymology *she-day*, 'self sufficient'. This is also found for Shaddai in Lxx Job 21.15; 31.2; 40.2. In the Lxx Pentateuch, Shaddai in effect disappears: the word becomes God, *theos*, (e.g. Num.24.4, 16), my God, *ho theos ho emos* (e.g. Gen.49.25) or *ho theos mou* (Gen.28.3; 48.3), your God, *ho theos sou* (e.g. Gen.17.1; 35.11), or their God, *theos autōn* (Exod.6.3). In Job, which has by far the most instances of Shaddai, it is translated in various ways: sometimes it is not represented at all in the Lxx, (thus Job 29.5; 37.23) or else it is translated as *Kurios* (Job 6.4,14; 8.3; 13.3; 15.25; 21.20; 22.3, 17, 23, 26; 24.1; 31.35). Most frequently it becomes Ruler of all, *Pantokratōr*, (Job 5.17; 8.5; 11.7; 22.25; 23.16; 27.2, 11, 13; 32.8; 33.4; 34.10, 12; 35.13), but in Zechariah 8.2 *Pantokratōr* translates 'Lord of Hosts'. This also happens in Revelation 4.8, where the title in the Sanctus of Isaiah 6.3 – 'Lord of Hosts', which the Lxx simply transliterates as *Kurios sabaōth* – becomes *Kurios ho theos ho Pantokratōr*. Shaddai occurs twice in Ezekiel: at 1.24, where most manuscripts have nothing but one has *'ikanos*;[70] and at 10.5, where Lxx transliterates *Saddai*. The Greek versions of the Hebrew Scriptures, then, give no clear guidance as to the meaning of Shaddai.

Now the etymology of the name may not reveal what it meant to those who used it. On the other hand, it cannot be assumed that word association in any text was creating a false etymology.[71] It is generally agreed that Shaddai was an ancient name, and also suggested that the ending *ai*, 'as an old feminine termination, preserved also in Syriac ... in Arabic ... in Ethiopic ... very probably occurs in the proper name Sarai' (Gen.12.5).[72] Now if Sarai is an old feminine form from *śrr*, rule, Shaddai could have been an old feminine form from *šdd*, a root meaning devastate, act with violence. She would have been the female destroyer. Or Shaddai might come from *šdh* meaning perhaps 'moisten' whence the noun *šd*, breast. Since *š* [sh] and *ś* [s] had the same written form, it is also possible that the name was linked to *śdy*, field, identical in written form to Shaddai. The suggestion that Shaddai derived from the Akkadian *šadu*, high/mountain is not likely as there is

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70 Codex Marchallianus, sixth century Egyptian.

71 As does Knauf see n.48 above.

72 *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch, rev. A. E. Cowley, Oxford: Clarendon, (1910) 1970, p.224 # 80 l.

no equivalent word in Hebrew.[73] Shaddai could, then, have been a female destroyer or a nursing mother or even the guardian of the fields. Or all of them. Here, since the name has a feminine form, we glimpse perhaps the ancient Mother, the source of life and its destroyer.

There may be a glimpse of her too in one of the texts from Ugarit where a series of interesting words occurs in KTU 1.23 R13 and R29. Wyatt's translation is 'Now the vast steppe, is the steppe of Athirat and Rahmay',[74] but 'vast' here is the superlative that is literally 'of the gods', and 'steppe' is *šd*, the equivalent of Hebrew *śdy*, field. If *šd* here were a divine name, and *ilm* not vast but literally 'of the gods', this would give the equivalent of Shaddai of the Elohim, as in Yahweh of the *'ᵉlohîm*, the literal reading of Genesis 2.4. We should then have the equivalent of Shaddai as the name or title for the deity whose geminated forms were Athirat and Rahmay: 'Shaddai of the Elohim is Shaddai of Rahmay and Athirat.' These two names appear in the Hebrew Scriptures as Asherah and the mysterious 'Womb' of Ps.110.3, equivalent to the Ugaritic Rahmay, from whom the king was born as the divine son. In other Ugaritic texts, Athirat [i.e. Asherah] and Rahmay appear as two aspects of Shapsh the sun goddess, the bride(s) of El and mother(s) of the royal son and heir.[75]

Shaddai could have been the Hebrew equivalent of Shapsh, the sun goddess. We have already seen plenty of evidence for the Lady as a solar deity: Josiah burned her chariot throne and changed the sun-based calendar. Ezekiel's visions of the glorious throne chariot were accompanied by brightness and the sound of Shaddai (Ezek.1.24; 10.5), and the return of the glory was described as a sunrise (Ezek.43.1-3). Her son was the anointed one in Jerusalem, and his title was *ṣemah*, which allows the wordplay of 'sunrise' or 'branch' (Zech.3.8; 6.12; but Lxx here has *anatolē*, sunrise). Malachi looked forward to the time when the 'sun of righteousness' would rise with healing in her wings (Mal.4.2, translating literally).

The priestly writer gives El Shaddai as the name of the God of the patriarchs, the one who gave fertility, fruitfulness and many children (Gen.28.3; 35.11; 48.3-4) and 'blessings of breasts, *šdym*, and womb, *rḥm*' (Gen.49.25c). The curse in Hosea 9.14 reverses this blessing: 'Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.' Now Shaddai, *šdy* is the dual form of 'breast' and *šdym* the plural form, and *rḥm*, womb, is that obscure 'name' in Psalm 110.3. The particular blessing of Shaddai to Abraham (Gen.17.6) and to Jacob (Gen.35.11) was sons who would be kings, suggesting that Shaddai protected the royal house just as Shapsh had protected the royal house of Ugarit. The anointed one[76] in Jerusalem is described as 'a young

[73] For discussion, F. Stavrakopoulou, *King Manasseh and Child Sacrifice. Biblical Distortions of Historical Realities*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004, pp.278–82.
[74] N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, p.327.
[75] Wyatt, pp.209; 327 n.16; 332 nn.47, 49.
[76] Reading Isa.52.14 as in 1Q Isa[a], 'anointed' rather than MT 'disfigured'.

plant', *yônēq*, literally a sucking child (Isa.53.2), which is how the crown prince was described in Ugarit, nursed by the great sun goddess.[77]

There seems to have been a similar royal family in Jerusalem: father, mother and son with heavenly counterparts. 'The one who dwells in the secret place of the *Most High*, who lodges in the shadow of *Shaddai*, says to *Yahweh* "My refuge and my stronghold"' (Ps.91.1-2). When Jerusalem was restored, the Third Isaiah promised that all who loved Jerusalem would suck and be satisfied from the breast of her consolations (Isa.66.11, translating literally). 'Instead of being abandoned and hated, with none to serve,[78] I shall make you majestic for ever, a joy for generations' (Isa.60.15). What follows here has the signs of a corrected text: 'You shall suck the milk of nations, you shall suck the breast of kings' is the ancient imagery of Shaddai and the pillar figurines with their prominent breasts, but here inverted/subverted. The old Shaddai imagery would have been: 'Your milk shall suckle nations and your breast shall suckle kings'. Reading *tynqy* as hiph'il *teyniqiy* rather than MT qal, does give 'Breast shall suckle kings' for the second clause, without any change in the consonantal text, but the first part would need to be hiph'il *hnyq* rather than MT qal *ynqt* to give 'milk shall suckle nations'. This is possible within the rules of scribal 'corrections', especially as it would avoid a perceived blasphemy.

Shaddai was terrifying, and the Lady in Jerusalem was also the fierce guardian of her city (Isa.37.22). Micah exhorted her: 'Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, For I will make your horn iron and your hoofs bronze; and you shall beat in pieces many peoples ...' (Mic.4.13). The Lady had horns and hoofs, perhaps like the horned bovine with her calf on the Pithos A at Kuntillet 'Ajrud or the horned sun goddess of Ugarit who suckled the crown prince.[79] Jerusalem was also beautiful, 'terrifying with battle standards', an unusual way to depict beauty (Song 6.4). 'Who is she that looks out like the morning star, beautiful as the moon, pure as the sun, terrifying with battle standards' (Song 6.10, translating literally). What image of the Lady of Jerusalem inspired this comparison? Thus the psalmist sang of Shaddai scattering kings in battle (Ps.68.14). Joel and Isaiah both described the day of the LORD coming 'like destruction from Shaddai', wordplay, since destruction is *šd*, (Isa.13.6; Joel 1.15), and so the unnamed 'destroyer', *šdd*, is perhaps the personification of this power. The sword of the LORD to punish his people is described as 'destroyers' on the bare heights in the desert (Jer.12.12); the LORD brings 'a destroyer at noonday' to the mothers of young men (Jer.15.8); the 'destroyer' would come on Moab (Jer.48.8, 18); and on Babylon (Jer.51.53, 56). Job, as we have seen, complained: 'The arrows of Shaddai are in me ... the terrors of Eloah are arrayed against me'

[77] W. A. Ward, 'La Déesse nourricière d'Ugarit', Syria XLVI (1969), pp.225–39.
[78] Reading *'wbd*, serve, from Lxx *boēthōn*, instead of MT *'wbr*, pass through.
[79] See n.165 below.

(Job.6.4). 'El has made my heart faint; Shaddai has terrified me' (Job 23.16). Naomi told the women of Bethlehem that Shaddai had dealt bitterly with her: 'The LORD has afflicted me, and Shaddai has brought calamity upon me' (Ruth 1.20-21).[80]

Perhaps some instances of 'field' in the Hebrew Scriptures should be read as Shaddai, either in the role as attacker or as nourisher. The LORD warned through Jeremiah of an imminent attack on Jerusalem. Because the city had rebelled against the LORD, it was surrounded by chariots and horses 'like keepers of a field' (Jer.4.17). This is an odd comparison which makes more sense translated 'like the guardians/keepers of Shaddai', especially as the Lady had just been banished from the city. Priests loyal to the older ways and ousted by Josiah did join the Babylonians to attack Jerusalem,[81] and so Shaddai's guardians could well have been among those attacking Jerusalem. The poet of Lamentations said of the siege of Jerusalem: 'Happier were the victims of the sword than the victims of hunger, who pined away, by want of the fruits of the field' (Lam.4.9). Shaddai is here too, in the double meanings that characterise temple discourse. The second half of the verse can also be, literally: 'the victims flow away, pierced as a result of the fruits of Shaddai'. The weapons of Shaddai perhaps? The rebel city had rejected wisdom, said Jeremiah, and the people were skilled only in doing evil (Jer.4.22). The land was about to be destroyed (Jer.4.23-26). The pattern is recognisable and consistent: the rejection of Wisdom meant a devastated land, as in Isaiah's vision of the land deserted until the Lady returned,[82] or the protests of the refugees to Jeremiah: 'Since we left off burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring out libations to her, we have been consumed by the sword and by famine' (Jer.44.18). This does not say she was benign, and so the afflictions could have been her sword and her famine. Wisdom, who held all things together in harmony (Prov.8.30) could also turn against her children when they rejected her: 'Because I have called and you refused to listen ... you have ignored all my counsel ... I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you ...' (Prov.1.24-26).

The Third Isaiah, in the late sixth or early fifth century, condemned the returned exiles and their restored temple because they excluded people who had formerly worshipped the LORD in the old way.[83] He summoned the beasts of the field to consume, the beasts in the forest (Isa.56.9). As in Jeremiah 4.17, the beasts of the 'field' could be the beasts of Shaddai, that is, the living creatures that formed the throne in Ezekiel's vision,[84] and 'the beasts in the forest, *by'r*', would have looked very similar in Hebrew to

[80] The conventional order: the LORD and then the Lady, see above, p.109.
[81] See above, p.66.
[82] See above, pp.92–7.
[83] See my book *The Older Testament*, London: SPCK, 1987, pp.201–20.
[84] See below, pp.242–3.

'the living creatures of the burning one, *bw'r'*. 'Field' and '*in* the forest' are not parallel constructions, and so the preposition *b*, meaning 'in', might originally have been part of *bw'r*. Suppose the prophet had been summoning the forces of Shaddai against the city, what were his reasons?

The detail is far from clear due to the state of Isaiah 56.9-11, but the gist is Enochic. In the *Dream Visions*, Enoch set out an alternative history that saw Jerusalem under the rule of shepherd angels from the moment the people abandoned the temple and lost their vision. The LORD no longer protected them, but allowed 'wild beasts' to punish them. The shepherd angels, the 'watchers', failed in their duty and they themselves became 'blind'.[85] They appear in Lamentations as 'the blind', the rejected guardians of the city who were banished. The LXX recognised the 'blind' as the watchers, *egrēgoroi*, whom the Enoch tradition knew as the fallen angels.[86]

> The blind/watchers *'wrym*, wandered through the streets
> So defiled with blood that none could touch their garments.
> 'Away, Unclean', men cried at them, 'Away! Away! Touch not.'
> So they became fugitives and wanderers among the nations
> They shall stay with us no longer. (Lam.4.14-15)

The Third Isaiah gives the same picture of Jerusalem, describing the rulers of the city as evil angels, watchmen who are blind and without knowledge.[87] 'They are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark' (Isa.56.10b) is not a certain translation, since 'bark', *nbh*, is an otherwise unknown word. 'Dreaming, lying down, loving to sleep' could also be 'sleeping seers, loving oracles', unlike Balaam whose eyes had been opened.[88] 'The dogs have a mighty appetite, they never have enough' might better be 'the dogs are strong willed, they do not know how to listen'.[89] 'The shepherds have no understanding, they have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all' (Isa.56.11). These negligent guardian angels were some of the 70 shepherd angels, also known as the sons of God, who had care of the nations (Deut.32.8). They were the 'watchers', *'wrym*, from a Hebrew root that can also mean 'blind',[90] and there are several places in the Hebrew Scriptures where the correcting scribes have concealed the ancient watchers who had failed and become 'blind'.[91]

It is possible that 'field' also conceals Shaddai in the *Song of Moses* (Deut.32.13), but here Shaddai is the nourisher. The *Song* has a unique

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[85] *1 Enoch* 89.51-71.
[86] *1 Enoch* 12.4. Greek text in *Apocalypsis Henochi Graece*, ed. M. Black, Leiden: Brill, 1970, p.27.
[87] 1Q Isa[a] has 'his watchmen'.
[88] 1Q Isa[a] has 'seers', *hwzym* for MT *hzym*, dreamers.
[89] 1Q Isa[a] has 'hear', *šm'h*, for MT be satisfied *śm'h*.
[90] *'wr*, pointed *'āwar* = blind, but *'ûr* = be awake.
[91] R. Murray, 'The Origin of Aramaic 'ir, Angel', Orientalia 53.2 (1984), pp. 303–17.

description of Israel's election: the LORD found him in a desert land, but nothing is said here of the Exodus, just as there is no Exodus in the most ancient Enochic history.[92] Israel then ate the produce of the field, *śdy*, and suckled honey from the rock and oil from the hard rock, *ṣr*.[93] Now 'field' and 'rock' here are interesting words: field, *śdy*, is identical in unpointed script to *šdy*, Shaddai, and suckling from a rock would be an unusual image but for the name Zurishaddai, my rock is Shaddai (Num.1.6; 2.12; 7.36, 41; 10.19). The LORD who cared for Israel was like an eagle guarding young, opening its wings and carrying them, another maternal image even though the verbs are masculine (Deut.32.1). 'There is much to be said for the hypothesis that we must consider this "tradition of finding" to be an old tradition, by this time half-forgotten, about the origins of Israel, which had in fact been almost completely pushed aside and overlaid by other traditions of the election (the Exodus tradition, the patriarchal tradition).'[94] If there are glimpses of Shaddai in this 'alternative history' of Israel, what else does the poem preserve from the older ways?[95]

The *Song of Moses* includes several lines that later scribes sought to 'correct'. There are vv.8-9, as we have seen, which imply that Yahweh was one of the sons of El; and then there is v.43, which, in the LXX and in the Qumran text[96] is twice as long as in the MT, and presents Yahweh as the high priest on the day of atonement. The Qumran text is:

> Rejoice, O heavens, together with him,
> and bow down to him all you *ʾᵉlohîm*,
> for he will avenge the blood of his sons,
> and will take vengeance on his enemies,
> and will recompense those who hate him,
> and will atone the land of his people.

The AV, based on the MT, is:

> Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people,
> for he will avenge the blood of his servants,
> and will render vengeance to his adversaries,
> and will be merciful to his land and to his people.

The lines missing from the MT included an important Christian proof text: 'Let all God's angels worship him' which is the LXX of 'bow down to him all you *ʾᵉlohîm*' (Heb.1.6). The Christians used the verse to identify Jesus as

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[92] See above, p.9.
[93] Targum *Neofiti* here has 'he *anointed* them with oil from the rock ...'.
[94] G. von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, ET London: SCM, 1966, p.197.
[95] Thus also in Lam.4.9.
[96] 4Q Deut^{q}.

Yahweh coming to atone the land, but the key line is no longer in the MT. The 'original' version of this verse has a temple setting, when the LORD, in the person of the royal high priest, performed the rite of re-creation on the day of atonement.[97]

There is no historical context for the *Song of Moses*, appended to Deuteronomy and attributed to Moses and Joshua (Deut.32.44), but the opening lines do suggest a Wisdom setting: 'May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distil as the dew ...'. The attention of the correcting scribes in vv.8 and 43 shows that the text changed after the Qumran copies were made, in other words, in reaction to Christian claims about Jesus and the use of v.43 as a proof text. Since vv.1-33 were used as a phylactery text at Qumran, the *Song of Moses* had special significance for that community,[98] which may explain why a text that needed 'correcting' could not be simply removed from Scripture.

There are images in vv.15-18 that also come from the sons of God tradition of v.8. The forms Eloah and Rock each occur twice where the context is divine parenting: 'He forsook Eloah who made him and considered foolish the Rock of his salvation' (Deut.32.15b, translating literally); 'You forgot Rock who bore you, you forgot El who brought you forth' (Deut.32.18, translating literally).[99] Verse 17, however, is full of problems: 'They sacrificed to *šēdîm* and not Eloah, gods whom they had not known, new recent gods whom your fathers did not know' (translating literally). Without the original context for this poem, and bearing in mind that the account of Israel's origins in this poem is unique, with no mention of Moses or the Exodus, *it is not possible to say who the new gods were.* It is entirely possible, if Moses and Joshua 'took over' this poem and incorporated it into the new account of Israel's origins, that the new *'ᵉlohîm* whom the ancestors had not known was originally *Yahweh 'ᵉlohîm*, the one LORD of the Moses tradition. Those who accepted the Moses and Deuteronomy tradition abandoned the idea of divine fatherhood and the sons of God. It could well have been said of them that they forsook Eloah who made them, forgot the Rock who bore them.

The Second Isaiah, the prophet of 'Yahweh alone' monotheism, marks the point where the older divine names were conflated and the 'sons of God' tradition was suppressed. All the texts equating Yahweh and El are found in his oracles. He proclaimed: 'Yahweh is the everlasting God, *'ᵉlohê 'ôlām*, creator of the ends of the earth' (Isa.40.28); 'You are my witnesses, oracle of the LORD, that I am El' (Isa.43.12-13, translating literally); 'For I am El, there is no other' (Isa.45.22; 46.9); 'Besides me there is no *'ᵉlohîm*' (Isa.45.5). The prophet also conflated Eloah and Rock with Yahweh: 'Is there Eloah besides me? There is no Rock, *ṣûr*. I know not any' (Isa.44.8), which is similar to

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[97] See my book *The Great High Priest*, London: T&T Clark, 2003, pp. 42–55.
[98] Phylactery N, 4Q141, is thought to have held Deut.32.1-33, but only vv.14-20, 32-33 survive, see *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*, VI, Oxford: Clarendon, 1977, p.73.
[99] In the Lxx, Eloah and Rock both appear as *theos* in each case.

'For who is Eloah but Yahweh, and who is Rock, *ṣûr*, except our God' (Ps.18.31). As Van Seters observed of the Second Isaiah: 'Such statements are not found in previous prophetic literature, so that we may be dealing with a theological and apologetic concern of the exilic period.'[100]

With the conflation of names came the transformation of imagery; there were no longer sons of God. El Elyon had formerly been 'the begetter of heaven and earth, *qnh šmym w'rṣ*' (Gen.14.19, translating literally),[101] the father of the sons of God (Deut.32.8) whose mother is not named as such in the Hebrew Scriptures, but in Ugarit had been the Great Lady. In Ezekiel she was transformed into 'the image of jealousy', *sml hqn'h*, (Ezek.8.3), because the correcting scribes added one letter to her unmentionable title *hqnh*, the creatress, the consort of El.[102] In Ugarit, Athirat had the corresponding title, *qaniyati'ilima*, creatress of the gods, but in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Lady vanished into the image of jealousy.[103] In the proclamations of the Second Isaiah, the Lady is restored as the Queen, the mother of many more children,[104] but El the begetter, *qnh*, became Yahweh the Maker, *'śh*, thus removing any idea of the sons of God. 'Thus says the God, *hā'ēl*, Yahweh, Creator of the heavens ... and stretcher out of the earth ...' (Isa.42.5, translating literally); 'I am Yahweh, Maker of all, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth ...' (Isa.44.24); '[I am the Lord thy God] ... that I may plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth ...' (Isa.51.15-16, AV). Yahweh, 'Maker of heaven and earth' occurs often in the later Psalms (115.15; 121.2; 124.8; 134.3; 146.5-6).[105] The Deuteronomist who compiled and edited Jeremiah's oracles also used the title, suggesting where it might have originated: 'Lord Yahweh, you made the heavens and the earth with your great power and your outstretched arm ...' (Jer.32.17). This is all far removed from the birthing images of the Rock who bore them and El who brought them forth. The evidence suggests that the idea of a procreator God and his sons was suppressed by those who equated Yahweh and El and gave to the 'new' Yahweh all the other ancient divine names. The Lady vanished. Those who retained belief in the sons of God – who ultimately became the Christians – retained also the distinction between El and Yahweh as Father and Son and honoured the Lady.

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[100] J. Van Seters, 'The Religion of the Patriarchs in Genesis', Biblica 61 (1980), pp.220–33, p.223.

[101] The title was found on an eighth–seventh century ostracon in Jerusalem, *'l] qn 'rṣ*, see Davies, op.cit., n.22 above, inscription 4.201.3.

[102] See below, p.240.

[103] See my book *The Great Angel*, London: SPCK, 1997, p.54, citing KTU 1.4.i.23; 1.4.iii.23; 1.4.iii.35, but using the alternative CTA designation.

[104] See below, p.193.

[105] N. C. Habel, '"Yahweh Maker of Heaven and Earth": A Study in Tradition Criticism', Journal of Biblical Literature 91 (1972), pp.321–37.

Eloah

Of all the Old Testament texts, Job offers most evidence for the older ways. The name Shaddai occurs most frequently in Job: 31[106] times, compared with 17 in the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures. Job also has the most instances of Eloah: 42 times compared with 15 in the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures, and these two names must be treated together. Eloah seems to have been a divine name: ‘In Ugaritic, Hebrew and Arabic (Allah < al-ilahu, the god) the usage as a divine name is clearly attested.’[107] This *ilh* receives a sacrifice of two ewes in the new year sacrifices at Ugarit,[108] and Herodotus, writing in the fifth century BCE said that the equivalent name Alilat, the older form of Allat, was the chief deity of the Sinai Arabs, a goddess identified as Ouraniē.[109] The book of Job is set in that region,[110] and it is interesting that a deity with a name so similar to Eloah was also known as Ouraniē, ‘heavenly one’ [the Queen of Heaven?] and was female. Maybe Eloah was a title for the mother of the *’^{e}lohîm* rather than *’^{e}lohîm* being just the plural form of Eloah.[111]

Just as possible meanings for Shaddai revealed something of how the deity’s character was remembered, so too with Eloah. The words most similar to Eloah, *’lh*, are the identical forms *’lh*, voiced *’ālāh*, meaning oath or curse; *’lh*, voiced *’allāh*, meaning oak tree; and *’lh*, voiced *’ēlāh* meaning terebinth. Eloah may be concealed in several texts that are now thought to be about trees. Jacob buried all the foreign gods under the terebinth, *’ēlāh*, near Shechem (Gen.35.4). Joshua set up a great stone in the sanctuary of the Lord at Shechem, ‘under the *’allah*’, presumably the oak tree that Jacob knew, the place where Abimelech was later made king (Judg.9.6), but here it is ‘in the sanctuary of the Lord’ (Josh.24.26). ‘Under the oak tree’, *tḥt h’lh*, could also be read as ‘instead of the goddess’.[112] It is commonplace to observe that Abraham set up an altar at the oak, *’ēlôn*, of Moreh because the Lord appeared there to promise him the land (Gen.12.6-7), and this was a sacred tree. Had the priestly writer told this story, he would have observed his own rule that the deity who appeared to the patriarchs was El Shaddai (Exod.6.3), so was the ‘tree theophany’ originally a characteristic of Shaddai? Did Shaddai appear in the tree or as the tree? Was this the ultimate

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[106] 32 if one reads Shaddai at Job 19.29 instead of ‘judgement’ *šdyn*.
[107] Thus D. Pardee in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons*, op.cit., n.48 above, p.285.
[108] KTU 1.41 R 14, *ilh*, which J. C. de Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit*, Leiden: Brill, 1987, p.60, n.28, suggests is equivalent to Hebrew Eloah, but Wyatt, op.cit., n.74 above, p.50, translates not as Eloah but as ‘his god’.
[109] Herodotus, *Histories* III.8.
[110] See above, p.16.
[111] F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962 edn, p.41.
[112] Eloah with the article is found at e.g. Daniel 11.38.

origin of the persistent image of the LORD in the tree who represented his mother? The Psalmist knew that the LORD reigned from the tree, as preserved in the Old Latin text of Psalm 96.10. When the LORD came to Eden, his throne was set up by the tree,[113] and the wall painting in the Dura Europos synagogue has the Messiah enthroned in a tree. The words *'ēlāh*, and *'allon*, both meaning 'tree' are part of the complex Asherah wordplay in Isaiah's oracle of the rejected Lady (Isa.6.11-13), where the sacred seed is preserved in the trunk.

The second word that resembles the name Eloah is *'lh*, voiced *'ālāh*, meaning oath or curse, but in covenant discourse it was the bond that held the created order in place. Now Wisdom was described by the LXX translator as *harmozousa*, the woman who joins together (LXX Prov.8.30), and the *qdš* in the land in the time of Rehoboam was translated *sundesmos*, bond (LXX 3 Kgdms = 1 Kgs 14.24).[114] Both these words share the covenant context and possibly an association with a female figure.

This binding oath is found in the *Parables of Enoch*, not found at Qumran but nevertheless an integral part of the Enoch tradition. The *Parables* are three visions of Wisdom[115] in which Enoch enters the holy of holies and learns the secrets of creation – exactly the wisdom that Deuteronomy sought to deny (Deut.29.29). The *Parables* presuppose a creation story very different from Genesis 1–2, but the one known to Job and his visitors. The world was formed when the Creator bound the forces of creation and thus imposed order, as in Psalm 2, when the earthly powers attempted to break free from the order upheld by the LORD and his anointed (Ps.2.7). Enoch learned the names of the fallen angels and the sins they had taught on earth, and then in an obscure passage, he learned about an oath that bound the order of creation. One evil angel wanted to learn the hidden Name that was the key to this oath, but Michael would not reveal it.[116] This image of the bonds of creation secured by the Name is also found in the *Prayer of Manasseh*, composed late in the second temple era.

> Thou who hast made heaven and earth with all their order
> who hast shackled the sea by thy word of command,
> who hast confined the deep,
> and sealed it with thy terrible and glorious Name ... (*Prayer of Manasseh* 3)

[113] E.g. *2 Enoch* 8.3.
[114] See also p.79 above.
[115] *1 Enoch* 37.1.
[116] *1 Enoch* 69.13-25. The secret Name is *Akae*, which Hayward suggested was a corruption of the Hebrew *'ehyeh*, the Name revealed to Moses, Exod.3.14. See C. T. R. Hayward, *Divine Name and Presence: The Memra*, Totowa NJ: Allanheld, Osmun, 1981, pp.126–8.

The secrets of the creation oath are set out in *1 Enoch* in the form of a [now fragmented] hymn or incantation with the refrain 'from the creation of the world and unto eternity', or 'from eternity to eternity'.

> And these are the secrets of this oath ...
> And they are strong through his oath:
> And the heaven was suspended before the world was created,
> And for ever.
>
> And through it the earth was founded upon the water,
> And from the secret recesses of the mountains come beautiful waters,
> From the creation of the world and unto eternity
>
> And through that oath the sea was created,
> And as its foundation he set the sand against the time of its anger,
> And it dare not pass beyond it from the creation of the world unto eternity.
>
> And through that oath the depths are made fast,
> And abide and stir not from their place from eternity to eternity.
>
> And through that oath the sun and moon complete their course,
> And deviate not from their ordinance from eternity to eternity.
>
> And through that oath the stars complete their course,
> And he calls them by their names
> And they answer him from eternity to eternity ...
>
> And this oath is mighty over them
> And through it they are preserved and their paths are preserved
> And their course is not destroyed.[117]

If the Lady as Wisdom held all things together in harmony,[118] and as *qdš* was remembered as the bond,[119] it is likely that Eloah was her name as the bond of the covenant, the oath. Oath and covenant are parallel terms (Gen.26.28; Ezek.16.59; 17.16, 18, 19), and when Isaiah warned that the everlasting covenant had been broken, he said that a curse, *'ālāh*, would devour the land (Isa.24.5-6). Zechariah's two visions – the curse in the flying scroll and iniquity enthroned in the ephah – were based on the old images of the Lady,

[117] *1 Enoch* 69.16-21, 25.
[118] See below, p.173.
[119] See below, p.210.

but parodied by the prophet to show that an alien figure was returning from Babylon to take her place (Zech.5.5-11).[120]

Although Eloah replaces El in Ezra's prayer (Neh.9.17 alluding to Exod.34.6), there are late texts implying that Eloah was a foreign god: the Chronicler had Sennacherib's envoys use Eloah to describe any deity 'No Eloah of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand' (2 Chron.21.15); and the heavenly messenger told Daniel of a future king who would heed neither the gods of his fathers nor any Eloah (Dan.11.37). Eloah cannot have been a foreign god for the Psalmist, however, who warned of judgement on those who forgot Eloah (Ps.50.22) and prayed for Eloah to slay the wicked (Ps.139.19). Other texts suggest that Yahweh Elohim, 'the LORD God' – the divine name characteristic of Deuteronomy – absorbed the names and role of Eloah. Thus the Second Isaiah, as we have seen, proclaimed: 'You are my witnesses! Is there Eloah besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any' (Isa.44.8); and the Psalmist asked 'For who is Eloah but Yahweh, and who is Rock except our God?' (Ps.18.31). The Second Isaiah shows the date of the change – within two generations of Josiah – and the Psalm shows the Deuteronomists' form of the divine name – 'the LORD our God' (e.g. Deut.5.2) – specifically superseding the older names Eloah and Rock.

Eloah also occurs in the psalm of Habakkuk, which, in its present context, is joined to prophecy from the years immediately after Josiah. The threat from Babylon was imminent: 'I am rousing the Chaldeans' (Hab.1.6), and Jeremiah described the social evils of the time, when Eliakim/Jehoiakim his son had been made king by the Egyptians after the death of his brother Shallum/Jehoahaz, 'You have eyes and heart only for dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practising oppression and violence' (Jer.22.17). No kings are named in the work of Habakkuk, but he prays for deliverance from the destruction and violence all around him (Hab.1.3; 6-17). *The men of violence could well be Josiah's cultural revolutionaries:* 'Woe to him who makes his neighbours drink the cup of his wrath ... The cup in the LORD's right hand will come around to you' (Hab.2.15-16). He learned that the LORD was sending the Babylonians against the men of violence (Hab.1.6), and the psalm attributed to him describes the imminent judgement. 'Eloah came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran' (Hab.3.3). Habakkuk was a temple priest-prophet, standing in the holy of holies ['taking his stand in the tower', Hab.2.1] and praying for an end to the violence. Like Jeremiah, he saw the Babylonian invasion as punishment on Jerusalem, presumably for the purges. It was long remembered that some young priests had joined the Babylonians to fight against Jerusalem and the new regime (Jer.38.19).[121]

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[120] See below, p.196.
[121] See below, p.210.

Most intriguing of all is Eloah in Proverbs 30.5, which follows a completely unreadable text. It was said of Proverbs 30.1b, 'The man says to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal ...'

> In such a verse, where there is hardly a glimmer of light, one feels powerless to make even the first move towards its elucidation ... It can only be explained as a deliberate process of mystification, in which case one has to look for a motive ... There seems to be nothing objectionable or dangerous about either of the conjectural reconstructions which would make it appear expedient, in the interests of orthodoxy, to conceal them ... We should look for an original that has the appearance of being theologically scandalous.[122]

The problem is that this is a wisdom text about the role of the king, as we have seen,[123] which once described an ascent into heaven to acquire angel knowledge that gave power over the creation. Part of this power was knowledge of angel names,[124] and in particular, the name of the Son which was deemed the seal of the creation covenant. In the *Parables*, Enoch ascended to heaven and learned the names of the archangels before learning the secrets of the creation[125] and later he learned the names of the fallen angels and all the evil each caused. He also learned, as we have seen, that the leader of the fallen angels had tried to learn the Name that bound creation into the great covenant, the 'oath'.[126] Knowing the Name of the Son gave supreme knowledge and power. This was the old religion, and after Josiah's purge, it was theologically scandalous.

Some of the old wisdom teaching underlies Proverbs 30.1-4. One possible restoration of the opening verse would be: 'I have not come to God, *I have not come to God and endured his presence,* for I am a brute and not a man, and I do not have knowledge.'[127] The clearest parallel here is the words of Job: 'For I was in terror of calamity from El, and I could not have *endured his majesty*' (Job 31.23). The contrast in Proverbs 30.1 is between a 'man', which in the code of the apocalypses meant an angel (e.g. Rev.21.17), and a 'brute', *ba'ar*, which was a technical term used by the wise to describe those without wisdom (e.g. Pss.49.10; 73.22; 92.6; 94.8; Prov.12.1). This 'brute' did not claim to have the heavenly knowledge, which was the 'word of Eloah' (Prov.30.5). The Deuteronomists denied that such knowledge was necessary, but did not deny that it existed. 'The secret things belong to the LORD our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our

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[122] W. McKane, *Proverbs*, London: SCM Press, 1977, p.644.
[123] See above, p.17.
[124] This was one of the secrets that the Essenes were forbidden to reveal, Josephus, *War* 2.142.
[125] *1 Enoch* 40.1–41.9.
[126] *1 Enoch* 69.1-25.
[127] See my book *The Older Testament*, London: SPCK, 1987, pp.100–1.

children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law (Deut.29.29). This is how the LORD spoke to Job from the whirlwind, asking him if he had secret knowledge about the creation, the old wisdom (Job 38.1–41.34). In what is clearly a denial of Proverbs 30.4,[128] Deuteronomy declared: 'For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that you should say, "Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?"' (Deut.30.11-12). Deuteronomy offered the Law as the new Wisdom (Deut.4.6), which explains why Proverbs 30.1 became unreadable. The rejected Wisdom was described as 'the word of Eloah' which was true, and no man could add to it (Prov.30.5-6). Thus Eliphaz asked Job: 'Have you listened in the council of Eloah, and do you limit wisdom to yourself?' (Job 15.8).

Job

Job preserves a remarkable pattern of usage. Shaddai, Eloah and El occur in sequence, as though they are equivalent names:[129] first there is El, then Shaddai, then Eloah (Job 27.2-3); next, there is Eloah, then El, then Shaddai, (Job 27.8-10a); and then the same: Eloah, El, Shaddai v.11b (Job 27.10a-11). Elsewhere, Shaddai appears alone only once (Job 24.1), and in all other instances the name is paired with El or Eloah. Job pairs Shaddai and Eloah (Job 6.4; 21.19-20; 29.4-5; 31.2); as do Eliphaz (Job 5.17; 22.26), and Zophar (Job 11.7). Bildad does not use the name Eloah. Job also pairs Shaddai and El (Job 13.3; 21.14-15; 23.16), as do Bildad (Job 8.3, 5) and Eliphaz (Job 15.25; 22.2-3, 17). It seems, then, that El and Eloah are in some way equivalents insofar as either can be paired with Shaddai, but both Shaddai and Eloah are words with a feminine form.

Even if this was only conscious archaising in Job, it would show that Shaddai and Eloah were remembered as the more ancient divine names. A traditional explanation is that the characters in the dialogues were not Israelites and so did not know the name Yahweh,[130] or it could be that the writer maintained the position of the priestly writer, who did not use the name Yahweh until it had been revealed to Moses.[131] The book of Job does not fit easily into the pattern of Old Testament as usually set out, and the rabbis could not agree about it. 'When did Job flourish?' they asked, and gave ten different answers, including that he never really existed.[132] The prose

[128] See J. Ashton, 'The Transformation of Wisdom: A Study of the Prologue of John's Gospel', New Testament Studies 32 (1986), pp.161–86, p.165.

[129] Most English translations do not distinguish between El and Eloah, using 'God' for both.

[130] Thus E. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, E. T. H. Knight, Nashville: Nelson 1967, p.lxvi.

[131] Thus the traditional JEDP analysis of the Pentateuch.

[132] *Genesis Rabbah* LVII.4.

framework (Job 1-2; 42.7-17) depicts him as a wealthy man who faithfully offered sacrifices (Job 1.1-5), and he fits best into the era of the patriarchs, which may be why the Syriac Bible has Job between Deuteronomy and Joshua.

Since the religion of the patriarchs was the way of life purged by Josiah, the book of Job may depict some of the turmoil that followed the purge. Ezekiel, in the generation after the purge, knew Job as a righteous man, along with Daniel and Noah (Ezek.14.14, 20), whose righteousness would save only himself from the imminent punishment of the house of Israel.[133] If this text came from the prophet himself and not a later editor, then Ezekiel knew the Job of the prologue, restored to prosperity because he trusted Yahweh, not unlike Abraham who trusted Yahweh and 'he reckoned it to him as righteousness' (Gen. 15.6).

Although Yahweh is the deity in the prologue, he is not the mighty figure of the Moses saga, but rather the guardian angel of Israel who is challenged to test his servant. This Yahweh belongs in the original text of Deuteronomy 32.8, as one of the sons of the Most High who became the patron angel of Israel/Jacob. The English translations do not give an accurate picture of the relationship between Yahweh and the sons of the *'elohîm* in the prologue to Job. The sons of God 'presenting themselves before Yahweh' (thus AV and RSV Job 1.6) implies that Yahweh dominated the heavenly assembly, but the same expression occurs in Psalm 2.2, where the kings of the earth 'set themselves *against* Yahweh and his anointed'. In this world, the sons of the *'elohîm* and Satan could challenge Yahweh, suggesting a time in the monarchy before Josiah.

Job and the three visitors – Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite – consider themselves wise men, and so the dialogues are presented as a wisdom text from the era of the patriarchs or perhaps from the turmoil when that era was coming to an end. The only certain context for the book is the internal evidence of the text itself. The views of the speakers are the only way to position the dialogues in the spectrum of the Old Testament and to establish where Shaddai and Eloah were used as divine names.

Job prefers the title Eloah, using it without parallels 14 times (Job 6.8-9; 9.13; 10.2; 12.4; 16.20, 21; 19.6, 21, 26; 21.9; 24.12; 29.2; 31.6). For comparison, Eliphaz uses it on its own 3 times (Job 4.9,17; 15.8), Zophar twice (Job 11.5-6), and Bildad not at all. For Job, Eloah is terrifying and no longer listens (Job 6.4,8; 24.12) although Job had formerly been heard (Job 12.4). Eloah refuses to turn back anger (Job 9.13), condemns him (Job 10.2), is unmoved by injustice (Job 16.20), and denies justice (Job 19.6). Eloah has taken away Job's crown and his glory, and sent troops against

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[133] This is very different from Abraham's debate with the LORD, when the presence of ten righteous men would have saved Sodom from destruction, Gen.18.22-33.

him (Job 19.6-12), although when life was good, Eloah watched over him as a friend (Job 29.2,4). Was it Eloah who had given Job his crown, just as Solomon had been given the crown by his mother (Song 3.11)?

Shaddai and Eloah were both used in Job to describe the spirit and were linked to wisdom and understanding. Eliphaz described Eloah as one whose breath was life or death (Job 4.9), the maker of men: 'Can a man be more righteous than Eloah, or more pure than his Maker? (Job 4.17). He knew that Eloah had a heavenly council that was the source of wisdom (Job 15.8). For Job too, the spirit of Eloah was life itself (Job 27.3,8). Zophar knew Eloah as the source of unknowable wisdom (Job 11.5-7), and in the words of Elihu, a later addition to the book of Job: 'It is the spirit in a man, the breath of Shaddai, that makes him understand.' 'The spirit of El has made me, and the breath of Shaddai gives me life' (Job 32.8; 33.4).

Job knew a creation story very different from Genesis 1. In chapter 26 he describes the creation – without naming the Creator, despite the fact that some versions insert 'God' in v.6 or v.7. In this creation story, the ancient giants [the *rephaim*] writhe under the waters, along with the others that live there, Sheol is naked and Abaddon has no covering before him. He stretches out the north over the unformed state [*tohû*, as in Gen.1.2], hangs the earth on nothing, binds up the waters in thick clouds ... encloses the presence of the throne and spreads his cloud on it. He draws a circle on the face of the waters at the boundary of light and darkness, by his power the sea is still and by his understanding he smites Rahab, the sea monster who represents arrogant disorder (parts of Job 26.5-12, translating literally). This is nothing like Genesis 1, but very similar to the beginning of Psalm 104, especially where the earth is set on its foundations, the waters flee and the LORD sets a boundary that they cannot pass; or to Psalm 74 where 'God my king' divided the sea, broke the power of the dragons there, and fixed all the bounds of the earth (Ps.74.12-17). This is the creation story of the everlasting covenant, and the setting for Job's anguished question: 'Am I the sea or a sea monster, that you set a guard over me?' (Job 7.12). Jeremiah also knew this fixed order of creation. Speaking in the same wisdom context as did Isaiah, to people who had ears but did not hear, and eyes but did not see, he compared the good order of the creation to the rebellious ways of his people: '[The LORD] placed the sand as the bound for the sea ... though the waves toss ... they cannot pass over it' (Jer.5.22).

When Yahweh replied to Job from the whirlwind – and we assume this is the final position set out in the many layers of the book – and asked Job how much of the creation he could understand, the creation was described in the same way: 'Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Who shut in the sea with doors ... when I made clouds its garment? Have you commanded the morning? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens?' (Job 38.4, 8, 9, 12, 33). The ultimate answer to Job's question about suffering was that he did not understand the greater plan of creation, the 'everlasting covenant' (Isa.24.5). Job had the same world view as Isaiah.

When the prophet described the effect of breaking the everlasting covenant he said that a curse would devour the land, there would be few people left, there would be deserted houses and desolation all around (Isa.24.4-13), exactly as he described the effect of abandoning the Lady: cities lying waste, houses without men, and the land utterly desolate (Isa.6.11). This picture of creation is also found in Proverbs 8, where Wisdom says she was beside the Creator as he 'assigned to the sea its limit ... [and] marked out the foundations of the earth' (Prov.8.29), but here the effect of abandoning Wisdom is made clear. She was described in Proverbs 8.30 as the *'āmôn* in creation, a word not found elsewhere, but thought to mean 'architect'. The Greek, however, translated it *harmozousa*, the one who joins together (Lxx Prov.8.30), which implies that she was remembered as the bond of the everlasting covenant.[134] This covenant-and-wisdom world view is the most likely context for the dialogues and for the use of 'Eloah' and 'Shaddai', given that Job is included in the Hebrew Bible, but represents a line of thinking very different from the later canonical 'orthodoxy' of the Deuteronomists and their heirs. The book of Job cannot really record a dialogue among non-Israelites, even though the names of the characters set the debate outside Israel.

The only clues to the 'historical' context of Job are his complaints about disasters which are very different from those described in the prose framework. He had seen a structured society destroyed and *the present form of the text attributes this to Yahweh* – the only time in the dialogues that the name is used. This is sometimes explained as a later insertion, but the context suggests it was original and intended. The 'new' God had caused the disaster.

> Who ... does not know that the hand of Yahweh has done all this? ...
>
> He leads counsellors away stripped and judges he makes fools.
> He looses the bonds of kings and binds a waistcloth on their loins.
> He leads priests away stripped and overthrows the mighty.
> He deprives of speech those who are trusted, and takes away the discernment of elders.
> He pours contempt on princes, and looses the belt of the strong.
> He uncovers the deeps out of darkness, and brings deep darkness to light.
> He makes nations great and he destroys them: he enlarges nations and leads them away.
> He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth, and makes them wander in a pathless waste.
> They grope in the dark without light;
> and he makes them stagger like a drunken man. (Job 12.9, 17-25)

[134] This role for Wisdom was known to 'Solomon', Wis.7.27–8.1, see below, p.210.

Job's complaints may well have been prompted by the crisis of 597 BCE if he had been one of 'the chief men of the land' carried off in 597 BCE (2 Kgs 24.15). His former life, when Eloah watched over him and Shaddai was with him (Job 29.2-4), had been a time of prosperity and high status: 'I chose their way and sat as chief, and I dwelt like a king among his troops ...' (Job 29.25). Job had 'instructed many' (Job 4.3).

Job and his visitors knew of the divine council and the angels; they would have been at home, as was Isaiah, in the Enoch tradition, and there are many links between Job, Isaiah and Enoch. In their debate they spoke of named stars (Job 9.8-9) and the ancient wisdom (Job 15.18-19). Eliphaz reminded Job that even the angels were charged with error, and El did not trust them (Job 4.18; 15.15). He asked if Job had stood in the council of Eloah, if he was the only one with wisdom (Job 15.8). Amos had known that the Lord Yahweh did nothing without revealing it first to his prophets (Amos 3.7); the Psalmist described this heavenly council where the unfaithful angels were judged (Ps.82 1-8) and where Yahweh was supreme (Ps.89.5-7). Isaiah had stood there too, and learned the fate of his land (Isa.6.1-13). Eliphaz asked if Job had been the first man [Adam] to be born (Job 15.7), implying that Adam had wisdom when he was with the LORD in Eden. Job also knew that he had a 'witness' in heaven, and he prayed that his blood and his cry would not be in vain (Job 16.18), echoes of Isaiah's description of the faithless vineyard that produced only bloodshed and a cry (Isa.5.7). In the Enoch tradition, it was blood and cries that caused the archangels to look from heaven and come to save the earth from the fallen angels.[135]

Having known Shaddai as a benign protector in the good times, Job had come to know another aspect of Shaddai: terrifying (Job 23.16), full of wrath (Job 21.20), one who had sent poisoned arrows (6.4), and treated him unjustly (Job 13.3; 24.1). Shaddai had not rewarded the faithful (Job 21.15) but had made him bitter (Job 27.2). Shaddai had rewarded the unworthy (Job 27.13). Job's misery was a sign that he had been touched by Shaddai (Job 19.21), but the wicked were not affected (Job 21.9). Job knew the possibility of atonement: 'Why do you not pardon, *nś'*, my transgression, *pš'*, and take away, *'br*, my iniquity, *'wn*?' (Job 7.21). Micah had used the same words to extol God, *'ᵉlohîm*: 'Who is a God like you, pardoning, *nś'*, iniquity, *'wn*, and passing over, *'br*, transgression, *pš'*?' (Mic.7.18). This older belief was very different from the teaching of the Moses tradition which came to prominence in the time of Josiah. After Moses had offered himself to atone for the sin of the golden calf, which was the older belief, this was changed to belief in personal responsibility, and so: 'The LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book ... In the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them' (Exod.32.33-34).

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[135] *1 Enoch* 9.1-11.

The so-called comforters did not come to comfort Job; they came to explain his suffering, and it was their new explanation of suffering that Job could not accept. He must have brought the suffering on himself. This was the crisis exemplified by the D writer's assertion that Jerusalem had suffered because of the inherited sins of Manasseh (2 Kgs 24.3-4); and this was the great question after the disaster of 597 BCE which Jeremiah and Ezekiel addressed. They both taught that there was a link between human sin and disasters, but for them, sin was not inherited; individuals were punished only for their own sins (Jer.31.29-30; Ezek.18.1-32). Job's three visitors assume the teaching of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, arguing that suffering was the result of human actions or punishment for them, whereas Job believed that suffering was caused by heavenly beings, in particular Shaddai. In the prologue, the suffering was to test Job's loyalty to Yahweh, but in the dialogues, Job knew no reason for his fate.

The three visitors tried to show that Job's Wisdom was invalid, and so the dialogues could represent a turning point in the development of Wisdom. How else can one understand Job's words: 'No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you' (Job 12.2-3). Given that there is little evidence for any context for Job, one point of contact with the Hebrew Scriptures could be the declaration in Deuteronomy 4.5-8: the LORD gave Israel the commandments to keep, and they would be the basis of their [future] wisdom. The three friends could be representatives of the new wisdom and the death of the old. It is only in this chapter that the name Yahweh is found in the dialogues, perhaps an indication that it was the new 'Yahweh alone' teachings that caused all the disasters and Job's dilemma. All nature knew that the hand of Yahweh had caused the turmoil: priests stripped, the mighty overthrown and the discernment of elders taken away (Job 12.9-25).

Eliphaz first advised Job to accept the unsearchable divine will: this was almost the older belief. The reproof of Eloah and the chastening of Shaddai would protect him. He would then laugh at destruction, *šd*, and have no fear of the beasts of the land, '*for you will be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you*' (Job 5.23). These letters, however, are very similar indeed to 'For your *covenant* will be with the sons of Shaddai, and you will be in a *covenant of peace* with the beasts of Shaddai'; and given the other evidence, albeit slender, this is unlikely to be coincidence. The sons of Shaddai would have been the *šēdîm*, the beasts of Shaddai were the throne; and the covenant of peace was the same as the everlasting covenant, the older view of creation. We shall return to the covenant of peace.[136]

Eliphaz knew Shaddai as one who favoured with reproof (Job 5.17, as did the Yahweh of Deuteronomy who disciplined his son, Deut.8.5) and

[136] See below, pp.219–21.

punished the defiant (Job 15.25; cf. Deut.28.15). It did not matter to Shaddai whether or not Job was righteous (Job 22.3); Shaddai just demanded submission (Job 22.3-6). The wicked man was punished because he tried to resist El and to defy Shaddai (Job 15.25). He argued that no mortal could be righteous before Eloah (Job 4.17), who did not even trust the angels. 'Happy is the man whom Eloah reproves; therefore despise not the discipline/bond, *mûsar*, of Shaddai' (Job 5.17).[137] He asked Job if he had the wisdom of Adam, or had stood in the council of Eloah (Job 15.7-8). Finally, he repeated that no man was righteous, and accused Job of failing to help the needy and assuming that Eloah was too far away in heaven to see – the wicked old ways which Isaiah also denounced (Isa.40.27). 'If you return to Shaddai and humble yourself ... If Shaddai is your gold and your precious silver, then you will delight yourself in Shaddai and lift up your face to Eloah' (Job 22.23, 25-26).

Bildad asked if it was possible for El to pervert justice or Shaddai pervert righteousness (Job 8.3), as though this was a contradiction in terms. This is very similar to the questions posed by Ezekiel: 'Yet the house of Israel says "The way of the LORD is not just." O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?' (Ezek.18.29). Bildad appealed to the wisdom of the past, and said that all events had a cause. Those who prospered had the true wisdom, and Job's suffering was proof that his ideas were wrong: 'Such is the place of him who knows not El' (Job 18.21). Zophar said much the same: the wicked prosper for only a short time and lose everything at the judgement (Job 20.2-29). Again, there are echoes of Deuteronomy: those who observe all the commandments prosper (Deut.5.32-33). Zophar, like Eliphaz (Job 15.8), claimed that wisdom was revealed directly from Eloah, and his words too echo Deuteronomy 30.12: 'Can you discover the things to be searched out of Eloah? Can you find out completely about Shaddai?' (Job 11.7, translating literally).

Do the present biblical texts contribute little to our knowledge of the nature of Shaddai before [Shaddai] entered the literary process?[138] The words of Zophar are still relevant: 'Can you discover the things to be searched out of Eloah? Can you find out completely about Shaddai?', but this does not mean that nothing can be recovered. There are patterns that seem to be more than coincidence, especially when set in the wider picture of the old faith and the cultural revolution under Josiah. Ancient deities were worshipped and described with a whole range of names and titles, and it would be unwise to assume that Shaddai or Eloah had only one identity, or even that they were distinct. Both had links to the older creation covenant, 'the everlasting covenant', which Josiah replaced with the Deuteronomists'

[137] *mwsr* could be voiced *mōsēr*, bond, or *musar*, discipline.
[138] See above, n.48.

version of the covenant,[139] and Shaddai was linked to child sacrifice which Josiah abolished, and which was also part of the 'everlasting covenant'.[140]

The Sun

There were solar elements in the cult of the first temple, as can be seen from the chariot[s] of the sun and the solar calendar, but those who purged the temple, and their heirs who wrote the D history, sought to obliterate this aspect of original cult: the calendar was changed, and the chariot was removed. Even Solomon's dedication prayer was altered, and reference to the sun was removed. It has to be recovered from the LXX which has Solomon's 'sun' proclamation at the end of his dedication. This was recorded in the 'Book of Song': 'The LORD knew/made known the sun in the heavens, but he said he would dwell in a dark cloud. I have built an exalted/royal house for you, a place for your dwelling/throne for ever' (1 Kgs 8.12-13, supplemented by LXX 3 Kgdms 8.53-54). The Hebrew text now begins with 'The LORD said he would dwell in a dark cloud ...' Why, then, was the sun removed from the temple?

Scholars, too, have tried to remove sun worship from the temple by assuming that it was imposed by Assyrian overlords, but it is now recognised that, just as sun worship was widespread among Israel's neighbours, so too it was long established in Jerusalem. In Egypt the sun god Re was supreme, and among the Hittites and in Ugarit the sun was a major deity, but for the Hittites and in Ugarit, the great sun deity was female.[141] Now the Hebrew word for 'sun' is usually *šemeš*, which can be masculine or feminine,[142] and so the possibility must be considered that in the Jerusalem temple the sun was an image for the Lady rather than for Yahweh. There were several theophoric place names compounded with *šemeš*, suggesting that they had been centres of sun worship: Beth Shemesh in the north of Judah, for example, was allocated to *the family of Aaron* (Josh.15.10; 21.16; 1 Chron.6.59)[143] and there were two other places with the same name (Josh.19.22, 38).[144] There was also the City of the Sun in Egypt, where people spoke Hebrew (Isa.19.18).[145] There are, however, no theophoric personal names compounding Yahweh and the sun, no Yehoshemesh or

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[139] See below, pp.218–24.
[140] See above, pp.130–2.
[141] J. W. McKay, *Religion in Judah under the Assyrians 732–609 BC*, London: SCM Press, 1973, pp.48–53.
[142] Also rarely *ḥeres*, a masculine noun, e.g. Judg.1.35, *har ḥeres*, mountain of the sun; Isa.19.18, *'yr haḥeres*, city of the sun.
[143] Possibly the same as Irshemesh, city of the sun, allocated to Dan, Josh.19.41.
[144] See J. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000, p.152.
[145] Another word for 'sun', see above, p.11.

Shemeshiah.[146] This shows that Yahweh was not represented by the sun. Sun symbolism belonged to another – the Lady.

Once it is recognised that solar imagery had been part of the Jerusalem temple cult, it is assumed that the sun was Yahweh, rather than the Lady, but why would Josiah, with his 'Yahweh Alone' movement, have removed sun symbols if they had represented Yahweh? Psalm 19 is thought to describe Yahweh as the sun: '[El] has set a tent for the sun, which comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber ...' (Ps.19.4-5), but Wyatt, having reviewed the work of other scholars, concluded that identifying El as the sun was not accurate: 'This seems to be an instance where some consideration of mythological realities evidently has a bearing on the meaning of the text, especially if the text is open to ambiguity.'[147] The psalm in fact described a tent set for Sun, and then the bridegroom, who was another deity, leaving his chamber. This was originally the marriage of El the moon god and his bride the Sun. Their child was Venus, the Morning Star,[148] but in Jerusalem he was Yahweh, the king. The middle section of the psalm, vv.7-10, describes the anointing which was the 'birth' of the king, each part of the body receiving one of the gifts of Wisdom, and this, as we shall see, was also an allusion to the Lady's tree of life.[149] Decisive evidence for Yahweh as the sun is said to be found in Psalm 84.11, 'The Lord God is a sun and a shield ...', but the Targum here has 'the Lord is like a *high wall* and a strong shield', suggesting that *šmš* here was known to have its other meaning, 'rampart', as in: 'I will make your *ramparts* of ruby ...' (Isa.54.12, my translation).[150]

Sun discs on horse figurines were found near the Jerusalem temple, together with the female figurines, and a sun chariot, or chariots, were removed by Josiah, along with the horses that the kings of Judah had 'given to the sun' (2 Kgs 23.11). Ezekiel described a group of men in the inner court of the temple, standing with their backs to the temple door, worshipping the sun 'towards the east' (Ezek.8.16). This must have been a sunrise ritual, another way of honouring the sun, although exactly what they did is not clear. 'They put the branch to their nose' is one possible but unlikely translation of the key words (Ezek.8.17). The Lxx has *ōs muktērizontes*, 'as though sneering', and the 'correcting' scribes changed 'their nose' to 'my presence'. This was a passage that required their attention – they detected the unmentionable. Now this ritual of turning towards the rising sun was remembered as a key distinction between the ways of the first temple and the ways of the second, which is consistent with abandoning the solar calendar at the end

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146 Day, p.160.

147 N. Wyatt, 'The Liturgical Context of Psalm 19', Ugarit-Forschungen 27 (1995), pp.559–96, p.585.

148 At this point my reconstruction diverges from Wyatt's.

149 See below, pp.369–70.

150 Since the line does not appear in the Lxx nor the Vulgate, it is not possible to make further comparison.

of the first temple era. The *Mishnah* records that when the two presiding priests with trumpets reached the eastern gate of the temple on the last day of Tabernacles, they turned back to face the temple and said: 'Our fathers when they were in this place turned with their backs towards the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, and they worshipped the sun toward the east; but as for us, our eyes are turned towards the LORD.'[151] Worshipping the sun [at sunrise] epitomised what the second temple had rejected, and it was contrasted with worshipping the LORD as this was done in the second temple. Turning to the sunrise to pray was, however, characteristic of the people who rejected the second temple: the Essenes, the Therapeuts and the Christians, and they were praying for enlightenment.[152] Philo thought of the sun as the 'visible copy' of Wisdom, an interesting echo of the ancient belief: 'Wisdom is not only, after the manner of light, an instrument of sight, but is able to see its own self besides. Wisdom is God's archetypal luminary, *pheggos*, and the sun is a copy, *mimēma,* and image, *eikôn*, of it.'[153]

Archaeology has recovered material to illuminate the cultural and historical setting of the 'Old Testament' period, but almost nothing relevant to the religious beliefs and practices of the 'first temple' period: a few pots and altars, and a very few words indeed, mainly in the form of graffiti on sherds and walls, and on seals. Such hard evidence as has been found for the tenth–sixth centuries BCE – the Judaean pillar figurines, the seal impressions showing a winged sun, the finds at Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom, and the Taanach cult stand, all suggest that the Lady was the major deity in that period, and yet Asherah and female deities do not appear in De Vaux's influential account of ancient Israel, even though he was a major authority on biblical archaeology.[154] Several scholars coped with the unexpected [and unwelcome?] female figurines by suggesting that they were toys.[155]

The most startling evidence for worship in the tenth century BCE is the cult stand discovered at Taanach in 1968.[156] Taanach is famous as the place where Deborah defeated the kings of Canaan (Judg.5.19) and was one of Solomon's cities (1 Kgs 4.12). The high place there, dated to the

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[151] Mishnah *Sukkah* 5.4.

[152] See above, p.47.

[153] Philo, *Migration of Abraham* 40.

[154] R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel, its Life and Institutions*, ET London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961.

[155] R. de Vaux '[Les enfants] s'amusaient avec des modelages de terre cuite, comme on en a retrouvé dans les fouilles. Les petites filles ont toujours joué à la poupée' in *Les Institutions de L'Ancien Testament*, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1958, p. 82. List of others who suggested they were dolls in Kletter, op.cit., n.8 above, pp.195–6.

[156] There were also two cult stands from the same period found at Pella, one showing two female figures on a lion's head, the other with stylised trees, see J. M. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp.10–12.

tenth century – about the time of Solomon – yielded 'Asherah' items: in particular, a mould for plaques depicting a female figure with huge eyes who was holding a round object decorated with a cross, possibly a moulded loaf; and a terracotta cult stand, decorated with four bands of striking symbols of the Lady. At the very top of the stand is a winged solar disc over an animal, possibly a horse but more likely a bovine as there is no evidence of a mane. There are four bands of decoration, separated by ridges, and the top of the stand is surrounded by a raised rim. The uppermost band depicts the winged solar disc over the animal who is set between two stylised trees or possibly pillars. In the band below this are two lions flanking a tree with six branches, three on each side, with a goat on either side feeding from the lower branches. Lower again, in the third band, are two cherubs, forming what seems to be an empty throne – there is a hole between the two cherubim, through which a light or another image could perhaps have been seen – and the lowest band depicts a female figure with prominent breasts and huge eyes standing between two lions. All these could represent the Lady as she was known in the time of Solomon in one of his cities, and not the Lady and Yahweh on alternate panels as has sometimes been suggested.

There is a curious correspondence between this stand from Taanach and those made for Solomon's temple (1 Kgs 7.27-37): not in size, since the Taanach stand was about one long-cubit high [52cm] and one third of a long-cubit square, and those in the temple were 3 cubits high and 4 cubits[157] square (1 Kgs 7.27), or 5 cubits high and 6 cubits square according to the LXX; and not in substance, since the Taanach stand is terracotta and the temple stands were bronze and mounted on wheels. Nor is the description of Solomon's stand clear: it seems to be a conflation of two accounts, vv.32-36 being parallel material, and there being several technical terms that are not known elsewhere.[158] It seems that the temple stands had panels within frames, and on the panels were lions, cattle and cherubim (1 Kgs 7.29). Above and below the lions and the cattle were bands of beaten work (RSV 'wreaths of bevelled work'), and the text emphasises that the panels were rectangular not round. The parallel account says that the panels were carved with cherubim, lions and palm trees, with bands round about. There was an opening at the top surrounded by a 'crown'.

Most of this passage in 1 Kings 7 is unreadable, but *the words that are clear correspond with features of the Taanach stand.* The imaginative reconstructions of Solomon's temple furnishings that appear in popular books must be abandoned in favour of the Taanach stand. Some of the problems in 1 Kings 7 are due to technical terms, but some suggest obfuscation – repetition and dislocation. The common features are the rectangular panels, bands of raised work between the panels, and decorations of lions, cherubim,

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[157] The type of cubit is not specified.

[158] J. Gray, *I&II Kings*, London: SCM Press, 1970 edn, pp.191–6.

palm trees and cattle. Could the Jerusalem temple stands have been similar in design to the Taanach stand, and if so, did they too depict symbols of the Lady? Two of the Taanach bands depict a pair of lions, with the Lady, or her tree, between them. Solomon's throne was also formed by a pair of lions (1 Kgs 10.19). The third band of the Taanach stand depicts two cherubim, and in the holy of holies there were two cherubim (1 Kgs 6.23-28), which formed the throne (1 Chron.28.18). The top band depicts the animal that could be a bovine. Solomon's throne was surmounted by the head of a calf, which means that the calf was an important symbol for the Davidic kings (1 Kgs 10.19).

The true significance of the calf has been obscured in the Hebrew Scriptures. When Jereboam declared his independence from Jerusalem (about 920 BCE), he set golden calves in Bethel and in Dan, and he appointed priests who were not Levites to serve there (1 Kgs 12.28-31). He feared that his people would be tempted back to the Jerusalem temple. Why did he need golden calves to keep people worshipping at his shrines? Presumably because that is what they knew in Jerusalem. The D writer presents the calves and Jereboam's appointment of non-levitical priests as examples of his wickedness, but when Jehu 'wiped out Baal from Israel' (about 840 BCE) he did not destroy the calves (2 Kgs 10.28-29). This too suggests that the calf was an important part of the cult that Jereboam decided to replicate. Hosea knew a calf in Samaria (Hos.8.5), and an eighth century sherd found in Samaria had the name *'glyw*, Egeliah, 'Yahweh is the calf'.[159] Hosea also knew female calves at Beth Aven (Hos.10.5).[160] The Moses tradition, however, had Aaron the high priest make a golden calf at Sinai to represent the gods who had brought the people from Egypt, presumably 'Yahweh is the calf' like the name on the sherd (Exod.32.4). In the dispute that followed, Moses invited the Levites to fight for the Lord as opposed to the calf, and so rejecting the golden calf became the basis for the Levites' claim to power (Exod.32.25-29). One wonders what status struggles within the priesthood were reflected in these stories.

Then there are the bovine [or possible leonine] figures found as graffiti at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, a site in the Sinai that was used in the eighth century BCE.[161] The figures were drawn on a large storage jar (pithos A). On one side are a male and a female humanoid figure with bovine/leonine head, a female lyre player, and a cow suckling her calf. There are letters which seem to say '... Yahweh of Samaria and Ashratah/his Ashera'. On the other side of the pot is a tree of life with two goats browsing on either side, and a lion beneath. There is no proof that the various graffiti relate to each other, but the juxtaposition of 'Yahweh of Samaria' and a humanoid calf could

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[159] Inscription 3.041 in Davies, op.cit., n.22 above.

[160] Beth Aven, 'house of iniquity', is a 'correction' for Bethel, 'house of God'.

[161] Z. Meshel, 'Did Yahweh have a Consort?', Biblical Archaeology Review 5:02, 1979.

well be depicting the calf of Samaria that was denounced by Hosea at this time. The cow suckling her calf suggests that the relationship of the two bovines/leonines was mother and son, and that the two humanoid bovines/leonines represent Yahweh of Samaria and his mother Ashratah, rather than Yahweh and his spouse as is invariably assumed. We tend to imagine the golden calves as life-like representations of the animal – some have been found – but these strange humanoids are like the creatures that the priest Ezekiel saw: the form of a man, but with animal heads and bovine feet (Ezek.1.5-10).

Bovines were important in the Enoch tradition. All the patriarchs from Adam to Isaac were described as bulls, but from Jacob onward they were sheep. In the future, when the true temple was restored, first the Messiah and then all the generations would be transformed again into white bulls.[162] And lions also represented the royal house, as we shall see. Ezekiel described the queen mother as a lion and her sons as lion cubs (Ezek.19.2-9).

Returning now to the Taanach cult stand, it is likely that the animal under the winged sun was a calf representing Yahweh/the king, and that the winged solar disc represented his mother, just as it appears in the stela of the seated god found at Ugarit. This stela shows El enthroned, receiving an offering from the king, and above them there is the winged sun disc enclosing an eight pointed star. Wyatt interpreted the figures thus: '... we have therefore a triadic group of the king and his divine parents, recalling the fiction that the kings are the offspring of El and suck the breasts of Ašerah ... here the mother goddess symbolically contains the tableau and protects the kingdom of Ugarit.'[163] The curious custom in Ugarit of gemination – representing each deity in two simultaneous forms and with two names – means that their great sun goddess Shapsh was known also in her two aspects as Athirat [= Hebrew Ashratah] and Raḥmay [= Hebrew Reḥem]. She/they were the consort of El, and their son[s] were Athtar [Venus], geminated as Shaḥar, the morning star, and Shalem, the evening star.[164] The sun goddess suckled her geminated son[s], as can be seen in the ivory panel found at Ugarit, which shows the horned goddess suckling twins and bearing on her head the same solar disc as appears on the stela.[165] One of the graffiti on the Kuntillet 'Ajrud pithos A shows two goats[?] browsing on a stylised tree. Since the tree represents the Lady, the pithos shows her suckling her geminated son[s], the scene in the second panel of the Taanach stand.

The four panels on the Taanach stand depict the role of the Lady in *theosis*, the process by which the human king became Yahweh, the divine son. Dever suggested that the four panels could represent the four stories of

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[162] *1 Enoch* 89.12; 90.37-38.
[163] N. Wyatt, 'The Stela of the Seated God from Ugarit', Ugarit-Forschungen 15 (1983), pp.271–7, p.277.
[164] KTU 1.23. Text and notes in Wyatt, op.cit., n.74 above, pp.324–35.
[165] Picture in W. A. Ward, 'La Déesse nourricière d'Ugarit', Syria XLVI (1969), pp.225–39.

a temple,[166] but four stages of a ritual is another possibility. The lowest panel is a female figure with prominent breasts, the Lady as she is also known from the pillar figurines. Here she is with her lions – a common motif for the great goddess. Sometimes she stands on a lion (thus the goddess on the Winchester Relief and similar images, or the Assyrian relief from Tell Asmar, c.800 BCE, showing Ishtar as a war goddess, standing on lion), or she sits in a chariot drawn by lions, (thus Cybele, for example as depicted in the treasury at Delphi, c.550 BCE). On Pithos A from Kuntillet 'Ajrud the Lady's tree is 'riding' on a lion, as also in the wall painting from the Dura Europos Synagogue in the third century CE, where a lion stands below, or rather across, the tree.

From Jerusalem itself, there are two pieces of first-temple evidence for the Lady and her lion. First, there is Isaiah's warning of the destruction of Jerusalem, when he plays on the similar sound of two words: *'r'yl*, altar hearth, pronounced *'^{a}ri'êl*; and *'ry'l*, lioness of El, pronounced *'^{a}rî'ēl*. Not only was the sound of the two words almost identical, the two exchanged letters, the *aleph* and the *yod,* looked very similar in the palaeo-Hebrew script of Isaiah's time. He addressed the threatened city as, Ariel, the lioness of El, who would become like an altar hearth, Ariel. Then her enemies would be defeated when the Lord of Hosts came like a devouring fire and the enemies would vanish.

> Ho Ariel, Ariel,
> the city where David encamped ...
> Yet I will distress Ariel,
> And there will be mourning and lamentation,
> And she shall be to me like an Ariel ...
>
> And in an instant, suddenly,
> You will be visited by the Lord of hosts,
> with thunder and with earthquake and great noise,
> with whirlwind and tempest and the flame of devouring fire.
> And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel,
> all that fight against her and her stronghold and distress her
> Shall be like a dream, a vision of the night. (Isa.29.1, 2, 6, 7)

Then there is Ezekiel's lament for the princes of Israel, Josiah's son and grandson. *Josiah's queen was described as a lion.* Jehoahaz son of Josiah reigned for only three months before the Pharaoh Neco removed him, took him to Egypt, and installed as king his brother, renamed Jehoiakim (2 Kgs 23.31-37). The next king was Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim, who was taken prisoner to Babylon in 597 BCE (2 Kgs 24.6-14). Ezekiel the temple priest

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[166] W. G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?*, Grand Rapids/Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2005, p.219.

described the royal family as a lioness and her whelps who were hunted and trapped in turn.

And you, take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel, and say:
What a lioness was your mother among lions!
She crouched in the midst of young lions, rearing her whelps.
And she brought up one of her whelps;
He became a young man and he learned to catch prey;
He devoured men.
The nations sounded an alarm against him; he was taken in their pit;
And they brought him with hooks to the land of Egypt.
When she watched and waited and her hope had gone,[167]
She took another of her whelps and made him a young lion.
He prowled among the lions, he became a young lion ...
Then nations set against him snares on every side;
They spread their net over him; he was taken in their pit.
With hooks they put him in a cage, and brought him to the king of Babylon;
They brought him into custody
That his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel. (Ezek. 19.1-6a, 8-9)

The lioness here is not one individual queen, since the two princes mentioned in the poem were sons of different mothers, but they were both royal sons of the Lady. She could be described as a lion with whelps by a temple priest one generation after Josiah's purge. In the lowest panel of the Taanach stand, then, the Lady with lions is presented in her familiar form.

Above her are two cherubim, which in the Jerusalem temple formed the throne in the holy of holies. The D writer mentions two cherubim (1 Kgs 6.23-28) but not that they formed the throne. Perhaps this was something that could not be mentioned. When Ezekiel saw the throne leaving the temple, as we shall see,[168] he described the Lady leaving. Had the cherub throne represented the Lady, this would explain the silence of the D writer. In Egypt, the great goddess Isis 'was' the throne. The hieroglyph of her name was a throne, and she was often depicted with the throne symbol on her head. To sit on the throne was to sit on the lap of Isis. Something similar happened in Jerusalem: the Chronicler reveals that when Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD, the people 'worshipped the LORD, the king' (1 Chron.29.20, translating literally). The moment of enthronement was *theosis*, when the human king became the divine son, an image that was known to the early Christians. When the Lamb, i.e. the human, was enthroned, he received the

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[167] This line is my translation.
[168] See below, pp.247–50.

worship of heaven and earth (Rev.5.6-14), and Mary was typically shown with her Son on her lap – the ancient throne image.[169] In the second panel, the cherubim of the Taanach stand represented the Lady as the throne.

Above the throne, in the third panel, are the two lions as in the lowest panel, but at this level, the Lady between them is represented by her tree, rather than her human form. She is suckling her son the divine king, but in his geminated form represented by the two goats. Gemination and goat symbols are not usually identified as part of the old temple cult, but traces survive that could have their roots here. The problem here, as always, is reconstructing what Josiah destroyed. W. R. Smith observed long ago: 'The worship of the second temple was an antiquarian resuscitation of forms which had lost their intimate connection with the national life and therefore had lost the greater part of their original significance.'[170] The accounts of ritual in the Pentateuch have been filtered through second temple memories and the 'correcting scribes', and so there are many gaps in our knowledge. The day of atonement, for example, the most important temple ritual, does not even appear in the calendar of the Deuteronomist (Deut.16). This ritual involved gemination: it was centred on two goats which had to be identical in every way (Lev.16.7-10),[171] just as the cleansing of a leper required two identical birds (Lev.14.4-7).

The day of atonement was part of the new year celebration, when the creation was re-created and the king was enthroned, that is, born as the divine son.[172] The two goats on the day of atonement represented the divine king: when lots were cast one goat was designated 'as the Lord' and the other was 'as Azazel' (Lev.16.8, translating literally).[173] The goat 'as Azazel' was driven into the desert bearing away the sins of the people, but the goat 'as the Lord' was sacrificed and its blood sprinkled around the temple/ tabernacle 'to cleanse and to consecrate' (Lev.16.19), meaning to restore the holy place and the creation that it represented. This symbolised the Lord renewing the creation with his own life. The mother of the Lord, the king, suckling two goats could have been a familiar image in the temple, and the renewal of the creation required the sacrifice of her son. There are echoes here of Shaddai.

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[169] Even on a lion throne, see A. Baring and J. Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, London: Penguin Arkana, 1993, p.580, which shows a fourteenth century German statue of Mary on a lion throne.

[170] W. R. Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 3rd edn, London: A&C Black, 1927, p.216; similarly his preface to the English translation of Wellhausen's *Prolegomena*, Edinburgh: A&C Black, 1885, p.28 'The new generation had no natural, but only an artificial relation to the times of old ...'

[171] *The Mishnah*, recording the details as known in the second temple, says they had to be equal in appearance, size, and value, and bought at the same time, M.*Yoma* 6.1.

[172] See 'Atonement. The Rite of Healing' in my book *The Great High Priest. The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy*, London: T&T Clark, 2003, pp.42–55.

[173] Ibid., pp.53–5.

How those two aspects were seen as both the LORD and Azazel is no longer known, but Yahweh as source of both good and evil was familiar to the Second Isaiah who had the LORD proclaim: 'I make weal and create woe' (Isa.45.7). This had formerly been the role of Shaddai. At Ugarit the two aspects of the divine royal son were named Shaḥar and Shalem, the morning star and the evening star, and one of the few traces of the Lady giving birth to her son in the holy of holies is that he was named 'Morning Star' (Ps.110.3). Shalem, too, was an element in royal names such as Solomon and Absalom (2 Sam.3.3), two of David's sons, and Shallum, son of Josiah (Jer.22.11); in other names it was compounded with Yahweh: Meshelemiah (1 Chron.9.21; 26.1) and Shelemiah (Jer.36.14), 'Yahweh is Shalem'. The two goats as aspects of one person survive in the earliest Christian understanding of the day of atonement. The text of the *Letter of Barnabas* is not entirely clear at this point, but the writer compared the two goats to Jesus crucified and Jesus at the Second coming. The scapegoat, identified by red wool tied to its horns, was compared to Jesus in his red robe being driven out of the city on Good Friday, and the other goat, by implication, symbolised the return in glory: 'The point of there being two similar goats, both fair and alike, is that when they see him coming on the Day, they are going to be struck with terror at the manifest parallel between Him and the goat. In this ordinance [the day of atonement ritual] you are to see typified the future sufferings of Jesus.'[174]

If the animal in the topmost panel of the Taanach stand is a calf, then the final stage of the process depicted is a calf between two branches of the tree of life, remarkably similar to a picture in the synagogue at Dura Europos over one thousand years later. The synagogue wall painting shows a figure enthroned in the branches of a tree. Lower in the tree is a lion, and standing under the tree is the table bearing the characteristically-shaped shewbreads. The tree, the lion and the shewbreads[175] are all associated with the Lady, and in this painting they are the context for the Messiah. In the mid-third century CE, then, when this synagogue was completed, the Jewish community in Dura Europos still thought of the Messiah in this way.

Reigning from the tree was also known by the early church – the tree was identified as the cross – and was a point of friction with the Jews. The *Letter of Barnabas* continued its somewhat hurried explanation of the atonement rites in their new Christian setting by dealing with the ashes of the red heifer. The writer gave the impression that he was reminding his readers of something they knew, something that was obvious. He described a ritual slightly different from the one in the *Mishnah*,[176] or else he was conflating

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[174] *Letter of Barnabas* 7.
[175] See volume 2.
[176] Mishnah *Parah* describes the ritual.

elements from the ritual for cleansing a leper – sprinkling with cedar wood and hyssop bound with red wool (Lev.14.1-9) – but his comparisons are striking: 'See how clearly he is speaking to you here. The calf is Jesus ... And why was the wool put on the wood? Because the royal realm of Jesus is founded on a tree ...'[177] The early church knew a version of Psalm 96 that included the line 'The Lord reigns from the tree'. Justin quoted this longer version in his debate with Trypho and used it as an example of a text that the Jews – the correcting scribes – had recently removed from their Scriptures because it was important for Christians.[178] This version of the psalm is found in the Old Latin text as preserved in the Verona psalter, and was used by Augustine, about 400 CE, in his commentary on the Psalms. Although there is no Hebrew evidence for the longer text – this part of Psalm 96 has not been found at Qumran – some Christians continued to use the longer version.[179] If the Lord reigning from the tree was such a sensitive text, it must have been very important to the early Church.

At the very top of the Taanach cult stand is the winged sun. The whole composition could depict the process of *theosis*, as the Lady first welcomed the human king, then enthroned him, making him the divine son, then suckled him, and finally established him in her tree.

The king then took the winged sun as his royal emblem, often with the letters *lmlk* 'belonging to the king'. *No royal seal has been found with any image other than the winged sun.* It seems that the four-winged sun was the seal of the northern kings and the two-winged sun the seal of the southern kings. The style of the sun symbols has been identified as depicting 'Syro-Palestinian, not Assyrian, theological and mythical ideas'.[180] Sixty 2-winged stamps were found in Kenyon's excavation in Jerusalem, but only one 4-winged stamp. Furthermore, the stamps were not used in the last years before Jerusalem was destroyed: 'The Kenyon and Shiloh excavations are in agreement that the deposits representing the latest occupation and destruction of the city contain no *lmlk* impressions ... From the evidence of our latest houses in Jerusalem ... we are inclined to agree [with Ussishkin] that the two winged solar disc symbol was not in use in those decades ... We are also inclined to agree [with Ussishkin], that the two winged stamp went

[177] *Letter of Barnabas* 8.
[178] *Trypho* 71.
[179] Known to Tertullian *Against the Jews* 10, the Verona psalter, and Venantius whose late sixth century hymn 'Vexilla regis prodeunt' was translated by John Mason Neale as 'The royal banners forward go'. The third verse is 'Fulfilled is all that David told/In true prophetic song of old/Amidst the nations, God, saith he, Hath reigned in triumph from the tree.' *Regnavit a ligno deus* was the Old Latin text, which Jerome retained in the Psalterium Romanum, but his second revision, the Psalterium Gallicanum, did not have *a ligno*. Using *lignum* rather than *arbor* suggests a Hebrew original, since Hebrew *'ṣ* means both 'tree' and 'wood'. Thus too *xulon zōēs*, literally wood of life in Rev.22.2 which also had a [lost] Hebrew original.
[180] A. D. Tushingham, 'A Royal Israelite Seal(?) and the Royal Jar Handle Stamps', (part 2), Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, 201 (1971), pp.23–35, p.31.

out of use in the reign of Josiah – perhaps because of foreign mythological connotations.' Other scholars had been prepared to date the earliest two-winged stamps to the time of Uzziah or even Jehoshaphat.[181] Or perhaps the sun symbol went out of use at that time because Josiah expelled the Lady.

All the archaeological evidence – the cult stand, the pithoi and graffiti, the winged-sun seal impressions – support the thesis that sun was a symbol of the Lady who was the mother of Yahweh and thus the mother of the king. The date for the disappearance of seal impressions and the destruction of the Judaean pillar figurines also supports the thesis that the Lady was banished from Jerusalem in the time of Josiah. There were some, however, who were confident that she would return: 'For those who fear my name, the sun of righteousness [or perhaps the true sun] shall arise with healing in *her* wings' (Mal.4.2, my translation).

[181] A. D. Tushingham, 'New Evidence Bearing on the Two-winged LMLK stamps', Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, 287 (1992), pp.61–5, pp.2, 63, 64, n.2.

4

The Older Covenant

All Things New

The D writer begins the account of Josiah's purge with Hilkiah the high priest finding 'the book of the Law in the house of the LORD' (2 Kgs 22.8). When he knew what the book said, Josiah ordered all the people of Jerusalem and Judah to go to the temple, and there he read to them 'all the words of the book of the covenant' (2 Kgs 23.2). The D writer wanted the reader to understand that the book was Deuteronomy, or at any rate, the middle section that is now called the Deuteronomic Code, and that this was the covenant (Deut.12-26). The traditional way of reading the Hebrew Bible sees the purge that followed as a great reformation, not unlike the Reformation of the Church in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries CE. All the elements that one party did not like were presented as later accretions that had obscured and even distorted the original faith. They were swept away, and the true faith was restored. Politics and personalities fuelled the mixture, and the whole political and cultural landscape was changed. The changes are still apparent and fuelling politics five centuries later.

It was the same in the time of Josiah. His 'reform' swept away all the elements that were deemed non-Mosiac. The temple was purged, the texts were purged and Moses himself was rebranded to fit the new image. Words were given new meanings, ancient concepts were redefined, and so on the surface little seemed to have changed. But this was an upsurge of fundamentalism, with all its intolerance and zeal to destroy what it did not like and maybe did not understand, and there were politics and personalities to drive the changes. As with the Reformation in Europe, the results of Josiah's 'reform' altered the political and cultural landscape of the whole area, not just Jerusalem and Judah, and the results were still apparent in the time of Jesus. Just as it was the work of a few weeks to destroy the art and writings of pre-Reformation England, so too archaeological evidence suggests that a similar trail of destruction is written between the lines of

2 Kings 23: 'Before him there was no king like him ... nor did any like him arise after him' (2 Kgs 23.25).

At the centre of Josiah's work were the book of the covenant, the new calendar and the new-style Passover. In other words, the calendar changed so that the new year marked the Passover and liberation from Egypt, and the covenant was redefined as keeping the ten commandments. Comparing the two different versions of the ten commandments shows how this was done. The ancient custom of the Sabbath was still observed, but for a different reason: to live in harmony with the work of the Creator was the older reason (Exod.20.8-11); but to remember their slavery in Egypt was the Deuteronomists'. Just as the LORD had released them, so they in turn had to allow their servants and animals to rest (Deut.5.12-15). They looked to the work of God in history, not in creation. On the surface it is the same commandment, but completely reworked for the new style of faith. Deuteronomy [re?]defined the chosen as those who had known Egypt, Moses and the Exodus (Deut.4.20), who had heard the LORD at Horeb but seen no form (Deut.4.12). The 'others', from whom they separated, had venerated the hosts of heaven (Deut.4.19-20) and seen the LORD at Sinai (Exod.24.10); and for centuries they remembered that the name Israel meant 'the one who has seen God'.[1] The two traditions can still be distinguished in the texts: those who saw the LORD and those who denied it was possible.

The same happened with the Passover. When Ezekiel described the festivals and sacrifices for the future temple in Jerusalem, as revealed by an angel, the LORD required a very different Passover from the one prescribed by the Moses tradition and also revealed by the LORD. For Ezekiel, Passover in the first month was to be celebrated in the same way as an unnamed feast in the seventh month, the latter presumably a remnant of the new year festival. The ritual prescribed for Passover and for the feast of the seventh month was very like the ritual for the day of atonement. The blood of a young bull had to be smeared on the doorposts of the temple, the four corners of the altar and the doorposts of the inner courtyard, to atone [i.e. cleanse and re-consecrate] the temple. On the fourteenth day of the month, the Passover had to be kept with seven days of unleavened bread and the offering of bulls, goats and rams for sin offerings (Ezek.45.18-25). Ezekiel's Passover had little in common with the Moses Passover in Exodus 12 apart from the name, the unleavened bread, and painting doorposts with animal blood, though for Ezekiel it was bull's blood and for Moses it was the blood of a lamb.

There are more problems. The Moses story prescribes a domestic ritual for Passover, and Josiah apparently transformed it into a temple festival, unlike anything since the time of the judges (2 Kgs 23.21-23). In fact, it is

[1] C. T. R. Hayward, *Interpretation of the Name Israel in Ancient Judaism and some Early Christian Writings*, Oxford: University Press, 2005.

not possible to reconstruct the earlier history of Passover. One of the Yeb papyri, dated 419 BCE, is said to mention Passover, but the word Passover is a reconstruction within a fairly large gap, and so the reading is not certain. The legible words of the papyrus order/permit keeping a period from the fifteenth to the twenty-first day of [ ] without leaven. This must have been the feast/pilgrimage of unleavened bread, mentioned in both the ancient calendars: Exodus 23.14-17, the 'Elohistic' version; and Exodus 34.18-23, the 'Jahwistic' version. 'Unleavened bread' was the spring pilgrimage, and both calendars link it to Abib, the month when they left Egypt, although in each case 'leaving Egypt' could be an addition. The J calendar also links the unleavened bread to the offering of the firstborn (Exod.34.19-20), another possible link to Passover. Both calendars assume an autumn new year, that is, the pre-Josianic calendar, because the ingathering [of grapes] was at 'the going out of the year' (Exod.23.16); or 'at the turning round of the year' (Exod.34.22).

Both calendars also show signs of D changing the way the text was to be read. Both say that at the three pilgrimage festivals, the LORD would appear (Exod.23.17; 34.23), but for both cases, the Hebrew Lexicon says the text has been re-pointed as 'They shall appear before the presence of the LORD' – hence the English versions – 'to avoid the expression *see the face of Yahweh*'.[2] This must have been the work of the Deuteronomists or their heirs, who maintained that the LORD was not seen, but only heard (Deut.4.12). What the ancient pilgrims saw when they 'saw the LORD' is not known – perhaps the king in his role as Melchizedek or perhaps the Lady? – but it is clear that these were the calendars of a farming community, not nomads. As the D party imposed their story of Moses, the Exodus and the forty years in the desert, so the three pilgrimages acquired a historical aspect: unleavened bread was linked to Passover, and, much later, Weeks was linked to Sinai, and Tabernacles to the temporary huts they had had in their desert wanderings. Thus the pre-Moses people would have seen traditional elements of their faith, stories and calendar taken over and reworked by the 'reformers', and then presented as the only truth.

Many words were given new meanings. Moses said: 'Behold I have taught you statutes, *ḥuqqîm*, and ordinances, *mišpāṭîm*, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom, *ḥkmh*, and your understanding, *bynh* ...' (Deut.4.5-6). The statutes and ordinances were to replace the older wisdom and understanding, but even the meaning of the words 'statutes and ordinances' was redefined. Deuteronomy's 'statutes and ordinances' were the rules for everyday living in the promised land (Deut.12-26), when they had formerly

[2] This is true of all similar instances, see Brown, Driver, Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962 edn, pp.816, 908.

been the principles of the creation. Under the new rules, the people had to destroy all other forms of worship, offer sacrifice only at the central shrine, observe strict food Laws, tithe their harvests, keep a calendar that did not include the day of atonement, have a king who was in effect a constitutional monarch obeying the Laws of the Levitical priesthood, and to reject any prophet who did not agree with Moses. They also had to observe many humane and practical rules such as returning stray animals, building a protective parapet on a roof to prevent falls, and paying wages on the day they were earned. In Deuteronomy, statutes were rules for people to keep. 'And he declared to you his covenant which he commanded you to perform, that is, the ten commandments; and he wrote them on two tables of stone' (Deut.4.13).

The Deuteronomists had the statutes written in stone, 'carved', and that is the underlying meaning of the Hebrew: *ḥq*, statute, derived from the root 'engrave or carve'. In the older system, the statutes were the great laws of creation, the rules for the elements, and they were engraved in eternity. The English translations obscure the older context; in my own literal translations of these texts, the words in italics all derive from the Hebrew *ḥq*: '... when he *engraved* a circle on the face of the deep ... when he set down for the sea its *engraved* mark ... when he *engraved* the foundations of the earth ...' (Prov.8.27-29): 'He *engraved* a circle on the face of the waters at the boundary of light and darkness' (Job.26.10); 'He made the *engravings* for the rain' (Job 28.26); he set a *statute* for the sea so that it stayed within its limits (Job 38.10); he set the sand as an eternal *statute* which the sea could not pass (Jer.5.22); he established the host of heaven and gave them a *statute* that they could not pass (Ps.148.6). Each human life had its statute: 'For he will complete his *statute* for me' (Job 23.14). These statutes included human behaviour, as can be seen from Isaiah's picture of the creation collapsing due to human sin, when people transgress the laws, violate the *statute* and so break the everlasting covenant (Isa.24.5, my translation).

There is a similar word *ḥqh*, also meaning 'statute', but the distinction between *ḥq* and *ḥqh* is not clear: *ḥq* is more often found in Job, Psalms, Proverbs and Chronicles, and the plural occurs many times in Deuteronomy; *ḥqh*, both singular and plural, is more often found in Kings, the Holiness Code, and Ezekiel. Job has *ḥqh* once to describe the statutes of creation: 'Do you know the *ordinances* of the heavens ...?' (Job 38.33); and there are several examples in Jeremiah: 'The *appointed* weeks for the harvest' (Jer.5.24); 'the *fixed order* of the moon and the stars ...' (Jer.31.35); 'the *ordinances* of heaven and earth' (Jer.33.25). This may be a distinction without a difference; it could have been just a matter of date or style. What is important is that both *ḥq* and *ḥqh* were used originally to describe the 'laws' that governed creation, extended to include ritual laws and social custom. The phrase 'statutes and ordinances' occurs in two forms: with *ḥq* it was characteristic of Deuteronomy (e.g. Deut.4.1, 5, 8, 14, 45; 5.1; 6.1, 20; 7.11; 8.11; 11.1; 12.1; 26.16, 17); and with *ḥqh* characteristic of

parts of Leviticus and especially of the Holiness Code (e.g. Lev.18.4, 5, 26; 19.19, 37; 20.8, 22; 23.14, 21, 31, 41; 24.3; 25.18; 26.3, 15, 43).

The original statutes were the everlasting covenant which secured the created order, but there is no hint of this cosmic scheme in Deuteronomy's Mosaic covenant, which rebranded the older covenant and made it rules for everyday living. Everything was then at a practical level: 'The secret things [the secrets revealed in heaven to the prophets and seers] belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this Law' (Deut.29.29). In the older tradition, teaching about the mysteries of the creation was brought from heaven, but the D denied this too: 'For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say "Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it down to us, that we may hear it and do it?"' (Deut.30.11-12).

The statutes were linked to the 'ordinances', *mišpāṭîm*, a word translated in many ways, but in the context of the everlasting covenant the overall meaning was the practical application of the statutes, *ḥuqqîm*: the *ḥuqqîm* being the theory and *mišpāṭîm* the practice. The LORD's question to Job: 'Do you know the ordinances, *ḥuqqôt*, [a related word] of the heavens? Can you establish their rule, *mištār*, on the earth?' (Job 38.33)[3] illustrates the idea well, albeit using a different word, as does the familiar: 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' The singular form *mšpṭ* occurs translated as: 'He is instructed *aright*, for his God teaches him' (Isa.28.26, of farming techniques); 'Whom did he consult for his enlightenment, who taught him the path of *justice,* and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?' (Isa.40.14); 'And you shall erect the tabernacle according to the *plan* for it ...' (Exod.26.30); '... the house [temple] was finished in all its parts according to all its *specifications*' (1 Kgs 6.38). The word is often translated 'justice', and in the 'other' tradition, the *mišpāṭîm* were closely linked to wisdom: 'The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom; and his tongue speaks *justice*' (Ps.37.30); 'Blessed are they who observe *justice*, who do righteousness at all times' (Ps.106.3). 'The thoughts of the righteous ones are *justice*' (Prov.12.5, my translation); Job claimed: 'I put on righteousness and it clothed me; my *justice* was like a robe and a turban' (Job 29.14). Micah said that the LORD required people to 'do *justice* and love kindness, *hesed* ...' (Mic.6.8), Isaiah that they had to 'Learn to do good, seek *justice* ...' (Isa.1.17).

The basis of the covenant also changed, not just its content. The ancient Shaddai covenant in the time of Abraham [which is attributed to Yahweh in the MT] was unconditional, but the Moses covenant was conditional on obedience to the written laws. This is the Shaddai covenant with Abraham, to give him the land:

[3] We shall return to the significance of *mštr*, see below, p.372.

> When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying 'To your descendants I give this land ...' (Gen.15.17-18)

> I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.' (Gen.17.7-8)

The covenant in Deuteronomy made possession of the land conditional on obeying the commandments:

> You shall therefore keep all the commandment which I command you this day, that you may be strong, and go in and take possession of the land which you are going over to possess, and that you may live long in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. (Deut.11.8-9)

The work of Wellhausen in the late nineteenth century emphasised this change in the nature of the relationship between the LORD and his people. It marked a fundamental change in their religion: '... the natural bond between the two was severed, and the relation henceforth was viewed as conditional ... the ethical element destroyed the national character of the old religion'.[4] The promise had been replaced by a conditional arrangement, and when disaster struck a few years after Josiah's purge, there were harsh explanations based on the new teaching that living in the land was conditional on obeying the commandments. The D writer blamed the disaster on the sins of Manasseh which his heirs had inherited (2 Kgs 24.3-4), Jeremiah and Ezekiel insisted on individual responsibility for sin,[5] and the book of Job was set somewhere in that turmoil. There was also Jeremiah's prophecy of the new covenant. The final form[6] of the book of Jeremiah has been so thoroughly worked over by a D writer that his original words cannot always be identified, but there are two remarkable 'covenant' passages which reflect Josiah's rebranding of the covenant. First, there was the new covenant to be written on the heart (that is the mind, according to ancient Hebrew anatomy), very different from the Moses covenant which the people had broken. Josiah's 'new'

[4] J. Wellhausen 'Israel' first published in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th edn, 1881, and reprinted as an Appendix to the English translation of his *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1885. This quotation is from Appendix p.473.
[5] See above, p.150.
[6] Or rather, forms, as there are two versions.

covenant was being used to explain the disaster, and this had plunged people into despair. The prophet's oracle, on the other hand, reminded them of the covenant they had abandoned, the everlasting covenant, even though that term was not used. The LORD's love for his people was a part of the created order, its statutes, and so could never be broken.

> Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day
> and the fixed order, *ḥqqt*, of the moon and the stars for light by night,
> Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar–
> The LORD of Hosts is his name:
> If this fixed order, *ḥqym*, departs from before me, says the LORD,
> then shall the descendants of Israel cease
> from being a nation before me for ever. (Jer.31.35-36)

The other passage links these ideas to the covenant and to the stability of the royal house and the priesthood, as noted by Murray.

> Thus says YHWH: If you could annul my covenant [of?] the day and my covenant [of?] the night, so that daytime and night would not come at their due times, then might my covenant with David my servant also be annulled, so that he should have no descendant to reign on his throne; and with the Levites, the priests my ministers ...
>
> Thus says YHWH: If I have not laid down my covenant [of?] and daytime and night, the statutes, *ḥqwm*, of heaven and earth, then might I reject the seed of Jacob and David my servant, so as not to choose from his seed rulers for the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. (Jer.33.20, 21, 25, 26)

> This passage is not so straightforward as might appear from many versions ... 'My covenant' is not *with* the day and the night, as if these were parties to it; the grammatical relationship of the words is naturally to be rendered either by 'of' or (better) by regarding 'day' and 'night' as each standing in apposition to *bĕriti*, (as if to say 'my covenant which consists in day and night') ... This passage is unique in the Hebrew Bible in that it speaks of the stability of the cosmos not only in terms of divine rules or statutes (*ḥuqqot*) ... but also in terms of a covenant, compared with the covenant on which the house of David based its title to rule.[7]

This is also the language of Psalm 148: the heavenly host established for ever – 'he fixed their *ḥq* which cannot be passed' (Ps.148.6), and of the 'statutes, *ḥqwt*, of the heavens' (Job 38.33).

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[7] R. Murray's translation in *The Cosmic Covenant*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1992, pp.4–5.

The creation covenant and the royal house are found together in Psalm 89, which describes a covenant making ceremony in heaven and on earth, when the stability of the creation was linked to the stability of the royal house, and the LORD's supremacy among the holy ones was mirrored in the king's supremacy on earth. The LORD brought order to the creation (Ps.89.8-13) and based his rule on righteousness, *ṣedeq*; justice, *mišpāṭ*; loving kindness, *ḥesed*; and faithfulness, *'emet* (Ps.89.14). Righteousness here means the state when everything is in accordance with the divine peace/wholeness/integrity, *šālôm*, and this is achieved and maintained though justice, loving kindness and faithfulness. The king was son of the LORD, the 'firstborn', with power over the creation and assured of divine *ḥesed* which was the covenant. He knew that the Davidic throne was secure because it was part of the created order. The third section of the Psalm (Ps.89.38-51) records the trauma of the broken covenant, with the kingdom in ruins, the monarchy gone and no sign of the steadfast love that had been promised. This psalm marks the end of the third book in the Psalter, and the end of an era, not only the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, but also the destruction of the royal cult by Josiah's purges.

The faith set out in Deuteronomy was a different world, with no place for the sacral kingship implicit in Psalm 89. The new situation is well illustrated by the new uses for the word *dābaq*, whose primary meaning was 'cling, cleave, keep close', as in '... their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth' (Job 29.10) or 'My bones cleave to my flesh' (Ps.102.5). It also meant closeness in the sense of loving care and union, as in 'Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh' (Gen.2.25); 'Ruth *clung* to her' (Ruth 1.14). In Deuteronomy there is a subtle change of emphasis: 'You shall serve the LORD your God; you shall serve him and cleave to him, and by his name you shall swear' (Deut.10.20; 11.22 is similar); 'You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him, and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and cleave to him' (Deut.13.4). In the D tradition, the word implies 'obey', which can hardly have been the sense intended in Genesis 2: 'Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and *obeys* his wife ...'[!] The most telling example follows the warning about the sin at Baal Peor:

> You who *held fast to* [*dbq*] the LORD your God are all alive this day. Behold I have taught you statutes and ordinances, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them; for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples ... (Deut.4.4-6)

In other words, those who obeyed the LORD and chose to keep the commandments were kept safe and had a substitute for Wisdom.

Despite Deuteronomy's new definition, 'cleaving to the LORD' – in the sense of union with the LORD – was remembered as the original meaning and continued to be associated with Wisdom and covenant. Thus the LXX described Wisdom as 'the one who holds all things together in harmony, *harmozousa*' (LXX Prov.8.30), a reference, as we shall see, to her role in/as the eternal covenant. At the beginning of the second century CE, when R. Akiba and R. Ishmael were disputing the true meaning of Deuteronomy 4.4, Akiba said that it meant literally, *mmš*, cleaving, that is, being joined to the LORD, whereas R. Ishmael taught that it meant performing pious deeds.[8] Another contemporary, R. Eleazar, who knew well the mystical tradition of the temple,[9] taught: 'the holy Spirit will surely dwell on the one who cleaves to the Shekinah'. On this M. Idel commented:

> This text presupposes the possibility of cleaving to the Shekinah; from the context, it is not clear whether this entity is identical with God or is to be understood as a manifestation of him. Even if the latter alternative is the more congenial interpretation, assuming a certain independence of the Shekinah from God, it is nevertheless considered to be a divine entity, *cleaving to which was negated in other classical rabbinic texts*.[10]

In other words, this mystical understanding of 'cleaving' to the divine – as was implicit in the royal cult when the king became the divine son – was not favoured by the Deuteronomists nor by their heirs, but was to become fundamental in Christianity. Jesus' high priestly prayer, as recorded by John, assumed this older belief in cleaving to the divine. The Father and the Son were one thing (*hen*, Jn 10.30), and Jesus prayed that his disciples would be one in the same way: 'so that they may be one even as we are one' (*hen*, Jn 17.22). Paul described this as 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph.4.3), Wisdom appearing here with her more familiar title 'the Spirit' and with her ancient covenant of peace 'holding all things together'. This, as we shall see, was the everlasting covenant originally associated with Shaddai.

The everlasting covenant had been upheld by the divine kings, of whom it was said:

> Righteousness, *ṣdq*, and justice, *mšpṭ*, are the foundation of thy throne
> Steadfastness, *ḥsd*, and faithfulness, *'mt*, go before thee. (Ps.89.14)

Only one of these fundamental qualities – *mišpāṭîm*, but understood as 'rules' – became part of Deuteronomy. Righteousness [both *ṣedeq* and *ṣ^e^dāqāh*] was not part of the new ways. Excluding the *Song of Moses* and

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[8] Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 64a.

[9] Babylonian Talmud *Hagigah* 14b.

[10] Sifre, *Shopetim* 173, quoted in M. Idel, *Kabbalah. New Perspectives*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988, p.289, n.121, and comment on p.39, my emphases.

the *Blessing of Moses* (Deut.32-33), *ṣdq* was used in Deuteronomy for the decisions of judges (Deut.1.16; 16.18, 19, 20; 25.1), for just weights (Deut.25.15), and once for kindness (Deut.24.13). The other form of the word, *ṣdqh*, was often used in a negative sense: whereas in the old days Abraham had trusted the LORD and this had been reckoned as *righteousness* (Gen.15.6), for Deuteronomy, *righteousness* was the careful keeping of all the commandments (Deut.6.25).[11] Not that there was any particular merit in this: the LORD had given them the land not because of their *righteousness*, but because of the wickedness of the other inhabitants whom they had to drive out (Deut.9.4, 5, 6).

Another foundation of the divine rule was faithfulness, *'emet*, and this was not part of the new world either. In one place the LORD is described as faithful to those who obey: 'The *faithful* God who keeps the covenant and steadfast love, *ḥesed*, with those who love him and keep his commandments ...' (Deut.7.9), but in Deuteronomy all the other instances of *'mt* or the related verb *'mn* are negative. '... You did not *believe* the LORD your God ...' (Deut.1.32; also 9.23); 'If it be *true* and certain that such an abominable thing has been done ...' (Deut.13.14; also 17.4; 22.20); 'severe and *lasting* afflictions, severe and *lasting* sicknesses ...' (Deut.28.59); 'You will have no *assurance* of your life' (Deut.28.66). Nor was *ḥesed*, sometimes translated 'mercy' or 'loving kindness' part of the Deuteronomists' world view. The LORD keeps covenant and 'steadfast love' with those who love him and punishes those who do not (Deut.7.9, 12), echoing the second commandment (Exod.20.6; Deut.5.10).

By way of comparison, the nouns meaning righteousness, *ṣedeq* and *ṣᵉdaqah*, occur 72 times in the Psalms, 57 times in Isaiah, 41 times in Proverbs; the noun meaning steadfast love, *ḥesed*, occurs 118 times in the Psalms, 4 times in Isaiah and 11 times in Proverbs; and the noun meaning faithfulness, *'emet*, occurs 34 times in the Psalms, 12 times in Isaiah and 10 times in Proverbs. The Psalms are hymns, the Proverbs are wisdom sayings and Isaiah is prophecy, whereas Deuteronomy is a Law book, but the near absence from Deuteronomy of concepts that had been the foundation of the Wisdom tradition, of Isaiah and his disciples, and of rule of the LORD through his anointed king, has to be explained.

Deuteronomy offered the 'statutes and ordinances' as the new wisdom and understanding (Deut.4.5-6), but they were very different from the 'statutes and ordinances' of the older 'wisdom and understanding'. These had been the great laws of creation and how people should live in harmony with them, the 'secrets' from which Deuteronomists deflected attention but whose existence they did not deny (Deut.29.29). This was the knowledge mentioned many times in the Qumran texts, the *rāz nihyeh* [the mystery of

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[11] Centuries later, this contrast would be at the heart of St Paul's teaching.

existence/becoming?] on which the wise had to meditate day and night since it was the key to knowing good from evil.

> By day and night meditate on the *rāz nihyeh* and study it always. Then you will know truth and iniquity ... For the God of knowledge is the foundation of truth, and by the *rāz nihyeh* he has laid out its foundation. Gaze on the *rāz nihyeh* and know the paths of everything that lives.[12]

This knowledge was the secrets of the holy of holies/heaven, revealed to those who entered the holy of holies/ascended to heaven. The boundary between heavenly and earthly knowledge was represented in the temple by the veil, and only those who passed through the veil, the high priests, had access to this knowledge. It was known to the first Christians, since there is a saying in the *Gospel of Philip*: 'The veil at first concealed how God controlled the creation ...'[13]

The key to Wisdom was not only knowing how all creation joined together and how it joined to its Creator (thus LXX Prov.8.30), but also knowing how the heavenly statutes related to the situation on earth. Hence the LORD's question to Job: 'Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you establish their *mšṭr* on earth?' (Job 38.33). The key word *mšṭr* is not found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, an interesting fact in itself, since the context suggests this was the divine key for relating the heavenly statutes to the material world. The root meaning of this unique noun is to arrange or to write, but its use in wisdom teaching can be seen in the related participle form in Proverbs 6.6-8:

> Go to the ant, O Sluggard: consider her ways and be wise.
> Without having any chief, *officer* or ruler,
> She prepares her food in summer and gathers her substance in harvest.

The wisdom of the ant is that she knows by nature how to live within the creation and does not need instruction. This is what Jeremiah meant when he prophesied a time when people would have the covenant written on their hearts, that is, naturally in their minds (Jer.31.33).

Only vestiges of this system remain in the Hebrew Bible. The psalmist was perplexed by the apparent triumph of evil until he went into the sanctuary of God: 'Then I perceived their end. Truly thou dost set them in slippery places; thou dost make them fall to ruin' (Ps.73.17-18). The LORD reminded the Second Isaiah what he had seen 'in the beginning', when he saw how the earth was made (Isa.40.22-24). The disappearance of the

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[12] 4Q417/418.
[13] *Gospel of Philip*, Coptic Gnostic Library II.3.84.

lore of the holy of holies is because Deuteronomy questioned its worth, offering instead a straightforward set of rules for living (Deut.30.11-14). Denying the value of the holy of holies vision is consistent with another characteristic of Deuteronomy: excluding all the temple lore apart from the ten commandments, the lore that others said had been revealed to Moses [or someone] on the mountain. After giving the ten commandments, according to Deuteronomy, the LORD added no more (Deut.5.22), whereas Exodus has a further seven chapters (25–31) of instructions given on Sinai for building the tabernacle: construction, furnishings, anointing oil, incense and the consecrating of the Aaronite priests. All this was another example of the old wisdom where what was seen in heaven/on the mountain had to be copied on earth.

The Deuteronomists were also responsible for editing the older wisdom teachings into the harmless platitudes we find in the Hebrew Bible.[14] Hezekiah, the proto-Deuteronomist whom Isaiah initially condemned, was responsible for making a collection of proverbs. These were interesting observations on life, but not controversial theology (Prov.25–29), nothing to explain why Deuteronomy offered the Law as a substitute for wisdom. The heirs of the Deuteronomists excluded the old wisdom from the texts that became the canon. This is why most of the remnants of the old wisdom *in context* are outside the canon, in Tobit, for example, where Raphael, just before he reveals his true identity, speaks in the style of a wisdom teacher. Presumably this is how angels spoke (Tobit 12.6-10). Enoch preserved the older wisdom, and this too came from the angels. His visions of wisdom are described as parables,[15] presumably representing the Hebrew *m^{e}šālîm,* but there is nothing like this in the biblical Book of Proverbs. The use of the word in *1 Enoch* shows that proverbs were linked to visions, the heavenly revelation being the source of the wise teaching.[16] The description of wisdom and its source in *1 Enoch* raises huge questions since it has almost nothing in common with the wisdom material now in the Hebrew Bible, except for Proverbs 30.1-4. This text describes someone who ascended to heaven to learn the old creation wisdom, and it is almost unreadable.[17] Enoch's revelations from angels would have been a rival to the revealed Law, and so perhaps wisdom teachings had not always been like the 'wisdom' material now in the Hebrew Bible. Maybe this was one of the areas where the censors did their work, and what the Deuteronomists sought to replace was a part of the older cult – the revelations and teachings of the angels – whose legitimacy they could not deny. Nobody knows what happened in the development and demise of wisdom teachings, and that includes those

[14] See volume 2.
[15] *1 Enoch* 37.1; 38.1.
[16] The reverse was also true; Jesus would describe the kingdom of heaven in terms of objects and actions in the world around him.
[17] See above, pp.144–5.

who have formulated theories about the origin of wisdom teaching within an ancient civil service, the intellectual elite of their time, the gentleman scholars of the foreign office whose legacy now is little more than muddled platitudes.[18]

There are a few fragments of evidence that may help to answer the question of the place of wisdom in the older cult.

- First, the setting of the Enochic wisdom visions is the holy of holies. The *Parables of Enoch*[19] are three visions in which Enoch learned the secrets of the creation and the imminent judgement. He used the titles 'Lord of Spirits', that is, Lord of Hosts, and 'Holy One', which both occur frequently in the pre-exilic material in Isaiah and in the Psalms, but less frequently elsewhere and *never in Deuteronomy*. Enoch knew and used the story of the fallen angels, the 'watchers'; and he saw the Great Holy One coming forth with ten thousands of holy ones to bring the judgement. The criteria for the judgement are not the ten commandments, but the order of creation; nothing 'transgresses its appointed order' except human beings.[20]
- Second, there is a fragment from Hecataeus, a description of the high priest written about 300 BCE. The writer was a Greek and simply recorded what he saw: 'The high priest ... is an angel to them of God's commandments.' When he speaks to the assembled Jews in the temple, he said, 'they immediately fall to the ground and worship, *proskunein*, the high priest as he explains the commandments to them'.[21] Here the high priest is an angel, the presence of the Lord, coming forth to bring the commandments, and this presumably is the way to understand Leviticus 9.23: 'Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting; and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people.' In the temple setting, this was the context for Isaiah's description of the 'servant' who 'brought forth' justice, *mšpṭ*, from the holy of holies after he had received the Spirit in the anointing oil (Isa.42.1).
- The third evidence for the role of Wisdom in the older cult is the opening passage in *1 Enoch*, which is a direct reference to the *Blessing of Moses* when 'the Lord came from Sinai ... with ten thousand holy ones ...' (Deut.33.2). This described the temple ceremony when the Lord became king, and all the leaders of the people were assembled. In human terms, it was the time when the Davidic king became the Lord. The Chronicler's account of Solomon's enthronement shows how this was understood: 'Solomon

[18] We shall return to this in volume 2.
[19] *I Enoch* 37–71.
[20] *1 Enoch* 2.1; 5.4.
[21] Quoted in Diodorus of Sicily XL.3.5-6.

> sat on the throne of the LORD as king ...' (1 Chron.29.23). This is a likely context for Psalm 50, which Mowinckel suggested had been part of a cultic covenant ceremony when the LORD appeared and gave his law.[22] If the LORD/the king then gave a blessing to the people, this is what now appears as the blessing of the tribes in the *Blessing of Moses*. Moses, as we have seen, gradually took over all the roles of the Davidic king,[23] and the *Blessing of Moses* appended to Deuteronomy shows what it was replacing: the ancient royal lawgiving. One or two things were changed for the new setting, such as adding 'when Moses commanded us a Law, as a possession for the assembly of Jacob' (Deut.33.4). This is the earliest example of what was the fate of many texts from the old royal wisdom: they became poems extolling the Law;[24] and the Lady, who had formerly accompanied the LORD/king when he emerged from the holy of holies, vanished as she was identified – literally – with the Law.

The two poems appended to Deuteronomy are now known as the *Song of Moses* [chapter 32] and the *Blessing of Moses* [chapter 33], and they are separated by a prose section in which Moses says farewell to the people of Israel and then climbs Mount Nebo to look over the land he will not enter. Without this section (Deut.32.44–33.1), the two poems read well as a unit. The first ends with the LORD and the angels coming to atone the land and bring judgement,[25] the second begins with the LORD coming with a host of angels to be established as king and Moses [or whoever he replaced] giving the Law. These were the ancient new year festival, when the land was cleansed and recreated by the LORD/the king during the first ten days of the year, culminating in the day of atonement (Lev.23.23-32) Deuteronomy omits these days from its calendar in chapter 16: they would naturally fall between verses 12 and 13. In both sections of the *Song of Moses* and *Blessing of Moses* where the LORD is set among the angels, the text is now damaged, the more extreme case being the opening lines of the *Blessing of Moses*, where *half the words are marked as being unclear*.[26] This must surely indicate deliberate obfuscation.

> The LORD comes from Sinai, and he shines forth from Seir *lmw*,
> he sends forth beams from Mount Paran and he comes from the myriads of *qdš*,
> at his right hand *'šdt lmw*. (Deut.33.2)

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[22] S. Mowinckel, *Le Décalogue*, Paris: Félix Alcan, 1927.

[23] See above, pp.49–50.

[24] See above, pp.73–5.

[25] Reading the longer Qumran text.

[26] Deut.33.2-3 is 26 words, of which 13 are marked as problematic in the apparatus of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*.

The problem here was the Lady. Of the difficult words, *lmw* is the rare form of the preposition *l*^{e}, to or for, found only in Job, and a noun following, e.g. ‘men kept silence *for* my counsel’ (Job 29.21). What the word might mean without a following noun, as in Deuteronomy 33.2, is not known. Presumably it is the remains of another word now lost, but here it occurs twice. ‘The myriads of *qdš*’ are the next problem: the Lxx read Kadesh, (in the desert of Paran, Num.13.26), which would be a parallel to Paran here. English translations favour the literal ‘holy one(s)’: ‘He came from ten thousands of holy ones’ (RSV); ‘He came with ten thousands of saints’ (AV). But the Hebrew word is singular and so could be Qudshu, the Holy One, one of the titles of the Lady.[27] The scene would then be the Lord emerging from the Lady’s host of angels. This is also the setting of Psalm 110.3, another damaged text, which, describes how someone became the Melchizedek priest after birth ‘in the glory of *qdš*’; and of Isaiah 9.6-7, where the angels sang of the birth of an angel child who was to be the Davidic king, and known, according the Lxx as ‘the Angel of Great Counsel’[28] that is, the emissary of Wisdom. The possibility that *qdš* here indicates the Lady is strengthened by the fact that the next line of the *Blessing of Moses* also has a word that could conceal her: *ʾšdt*, an otherwise unknown word, was perhaps originally *ʾšrt*, Ashratah, since Hebrew *d* and *r* are very similar letters. It became the custom to divide the letters into two words and read them as fire, *ʾš*, and law, *dt*: ‘from his right hand went a fiery law for them’ (thus AV);[29] or to add two letters and read *ʾš dlqt*, ‘with flaming fire at his right hand’ (thus RSV). Law, *dt*, however, is a word that only occurs in Ezra and Esther, texts from Persian period (e.g. Ezra 8.36; Est.1.8), which suggests when the word might have been divided and the Lady banished.[30] The original description of the Lord appearing in brilliance probably said that he emerged from the host of Qudshu’s angels, with Ashratah at his right hand,[31] but it was the Lady and her angels whom Josiah banished from the temple.

Now ‘Ashratah at his right hand’ is the role of the queen in Psalm 45, which extols the newly anointed king who has become divine, but this is yet another ‘difficult’ passage. The version found at Qumran has material additional to the Hebrew and the Lxx before the present v.6, but it is no longer legible. It would be interesting to know what formerly preceded the line addressed to the king: ‘Your throne is a throne of God …’ The original context, however, was still known to the early Christians and used as a proof text to identify Jesus as the Son. They knew that the Psalm was describing the heavenly reality that was replicated on earth in the temple. The Anointed

[27] M. Dijkstra, ‘El the God of Israel …’ in *Only One God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah*, eds B. Becking, M. Dijkstra, M. C. A. Korpel and K. J. H. Vriezen, London: Continuum, 2001, pp.81–126, p.115.

[28] The four titles in the Hebrew of Isa.9.6 become just one in the Lxx.

[29] Thus the Vulgate, *ignea lex*. The Lxx has *aggeloi met’ autou*, angels with him.

[30] BDB, see above, n.2, says the reading in Deut.33.2 is corrupt, p.206b.

[31] See above, p.80.

One (Ps.45.7) was the LORD, the Son, anointed by El (God the Father) as the divine king, as Eusebius explained early in the fourth century:

> Wherefore in the Psalms this oracle says to this same being anointed of the Father:
>
> 'Thy throne O God, is for ever and ever ...
> Wherefore God, thy God hath anointed thee ...'
>
> ... so that the Anointer, being the supreme God, is far above the Anointed, he being God in a different sense. And this would be clear to anyone who knew Hebrew.[32]

This psalm is therefore another glimpse of the holy of holies and the anointed king. He holds the sceptre of the kingdom which is the sceptre of 'uprightness', *mîšor*, (Ps.45.6), a word from the wisdom tradition that means literally 'level ground', and used both here and elsewhere in parallel to righteousness: 'With righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity, *mîšor*, for the meek of the earth' (Isa.11.4).[33] *At his right hand stands the Queen in gold of Ophir* (Ps.45.9) – but here again there are problems. The 'queen' is not one of the usual words (*mlkh*, *mlkt*), but *šēgāl*, a word which the later editors thought obscene, and replaced elsewhere with the euphemism 'lie with', *škb*. The original verb meant to rape or prostitute, and in that culture, such a woman was disgraced: 'Where have you not been lain with?' (Jer.3.2; also with violence implicit, Deut.28.30; Isa.13.16; Zech.14.2).[34] The editor's opinion of the Lady has been written into the transmission of this psalm, which describes a royal wedding. The 'disgraced woman' who stands beside the king, however, must be his mother since the new bride is described separately. In heaven, she was Ashratah at the right hand of the LORD, but on earth, she was the queen mother at the right hand of the king on his wedding day (cf. Song of Songs 3.11).

Returning to the *Blessing of Moses*, the opening verses present more problems. In addition to the difficult words in v.2, *none* of the eleven words in v.3 is clear, and ingenious reconstructions have been proposed. This passage is about a theophany when the LORD became king and someone – surely the king in the original text – gave the law. Elsewhere, theophany is associated with judgement (e.g. Deut.32.43; Hab.2.20–3.19; Revelation from ch. 8 onwards), and king-making is associated with triumph over enemies (e.g. Pss.2.8-11; 89.20-22; 110.2, 5-6), and so similar themes are to be expected here. 'Yea he loved his people' is better read as 'His anger smote the peoples',[35] since 'yea' and 'anger' are both written *'p*, and *hbb*,

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32 Eusebius, *Proof of the Gospel* IV.15.

33 As in Isa.40.4: 'the uneven ground shall become *level*'.

34 The word remains at Neh.2.6, for the Persian queen.

35 As proposed in Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica*.

love, is like *hrb*, smite, *b* and *r* being similar letters.[36] 'So they followed in thy steps' is better read as 'And they humbled themselves', which assumes that *whmtku* was originally written as one word and not two: *whm tku*.[37] The problem with the final words – 'every one shall receive of thy words' (Deut.33.3b, AV) – is that 'words' here is a form not found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, being, apparently, a feminine plural form of what is elsewhere a masculine noun; and the verb being singular when a plural makes better sense. The Vulgate translated as a plural – *accipient de doctrina illius* – and the Samaritan text has the plural: 'They received from his words.' Deuteronomy 33.3 may once have been:

> His anger smote the peoples, all his holy ones were with him.
> And they humbled themselves and received from his words.

The last of the ancient judgement theophanies in the Hebrew Bible is in Malachi, a collection of prophetic material from well into the second temple era. The angel of the covenant would come to the temple (Mal.3.1) and bring judgement, but before he came, Elijah would return to warn of what was to come (Mal.4.5-6). On the day of judgement, the sun of righteousness would arise with healing in *her* wings (Mal.4.2, translating literally), in other words, on the day of the LORD's judgement, the Lady would return, just as she appeared at the right hand in the *Blessing of Moses*. The Lady was not forgotten, and Malachi's words shaped the expectation of those who became Christians. Mark's Jesus warned: 'I tell you that Elijah has come' (Mk 9.13), and Matthew's community of Hebrew Christians remembered the words of Jesus: '... if you are willing to accept it, [John] is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear' (Mt.11.14) – the latter indicating that this was the interpretation put on current events by Jesus and the early Church. Other Christians saw the entry of the infant Jesus and Mary into the temple as the LORD returning to his temple with the Lady, his mother. Simeon saw the Child as bringing both salvation and judgement (Lk.2.29-35), and later writers put into words what may have been in the oral tradition from the beginning.

> Then old Simeon saw him shining like a pillar of light, when the lady Mary his virgin mother, rejoicing over him, was carrying him in her arms. And angels praising him, stood around him in a circle like guards standing round a king.[38]

The Christian community saw significance in Jesus *and his mother* coming to the temple, and the encircling angels indicate a theophany. Simeon sang

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[36] The LXX *epheisato*, had mercy, implies Hebrew *rḥm*.
[37] As suggested in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*.
[38] Arabic *Gospel of the Infancy* 6.

of this being the LORD come to bring salvation and judgement, and so it was the ancient theophany *of the Lady and her Son* coming to the temple.

The original form of the opening verses of the *Blessing of Moses* may be lost forever, and any attempted reconstructions can never be more than ingenious guesswork. In the light of similar passages and later memory, however, when the LORD appeared in the temple on the day of judgement to become the Davidic king, *the Lady and the angels appeared with him.* The questions are: why is an ancient poem now so damaged, especially when so many other texts that seem to deal with the Lady and her angels are also in this state; and how did the people who became the first Christians know these apparently lost traditions from the older temple?

The influence of the Deuteronomists, best represented by the temple purges in the time of Josiah, was far-reaching and long-lasting, changing the meanings of individual words, and changing the way of reading several texts. Insofar as this process systematically obscured and obliterated the older faith, it became the major obstruction facing later scholars who wanted to establish the relationship between the Old Testament and the New. Fortunately, memories of the older ways were preserved outside the stream of texts that became the Hebrew Scriptures, and they reappeared in Christianity in their original context. It is a great irony and a great sadness that those Christians most committed to a Bible-based tradition, *sola scriptura*, are perhaps the least likely to read the Bible in its original context.

Holy Mountains

There were many holy mountains in the Old Testament, or rather, many names for a holy mountain, which 'was' the temple mount. A distinctive element in Hebrew mythology was the tendency to coalesce all mountain scenes onto this one holy mountain: thus Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah (Gen.22.2), on the very altar that Adam had made which was destroyed in the great flood but rebuilt by Noah.[39] The temple was later built on the same site (2 Chron.3.1). It is no surprise that the Law was also given on this holy mountain, even if there had been memories of an event elsewhere.[40] The mountain was also the first dry land to appear when the world was created, where the first temple had been built, and it was the original Eden. Temple ritual enacted various mountain-top events. In the glorious future, the mountain of the temple would be the highest of all mountains (Isa.2.2), but in reality the temple was overlooked by a fortress built on higher ground. Aristeas – perhaps

[39] Targum *Ps.Jonathan* to Gen.22.9.

[40] See below, pp.225–9.

in the second century BCE – was able to look down into the temple from higher ground on which there was a citadel,[41] and Simon the Maccabee, in his first year as high priest, 142 BCE, demolished this high ground. The task took three years, 'after which the temple was the highest of all the buildings, now that the citadel, as well as the mountain on which it stood, were demolished'.[42]

Even though the holy mountains tended to coalesce in both history and ritual, their names make it possible to trace something of the various strands that formed the tradition. In this respect the Deuteronomists are easy to identify: their mountain was named Horeb, and it came to be identified with Sinai as the place where the Law was given. The history of Sinai is more complex, since this was a holy mountain during the first temple period, and the holy of holies 'was' Sinai, the place of the LORD's throne. But this temple mountain also absorbed elements from the myths of Canaan, and was known as the mountain of the north. The Lady was originally the Lady of Sinai, and her role there can still be teased out of the web of mountain traditions.

Exodus, lawgiving and Sinai were not originally one saga. The *Song of the Sea* (Exod.15.1-18), in its present context sung by Moses and the people of Israel, describes the triumph over Pharaoh's army and the triumphant journey into the land of Canaan. There the LORD planted his people on the mountain where he lived in his holy place. Presumably the holy place was Jerusalem, making this a poem about Exodus, conquest and Jerusalem described as a mountain. There is no mention of Sinai or the Law. Scholars cannot agree on a date for this poem: some have argued for twelfth or eleventh century BCE, others that the archaic forms of language in the poem were a literary fiction from a later age.[43] What is certain is that at some stage, the Exodus and conquest story could be told without mentioning Sinai, the mountain of the Lady. This is hardly surprising, since the Exodus was in effect the 'creed' of the Deuteronomists. So, too, the Passover 'creed' in Deuteronomy relates the story of Exodus and then the gift of the land (Deut.6.21-25), and the harvest offering 'creed' in Deuteronomy is similar (Deut.26.5-11).[44] This is also true on a larger scale in the Pentateuch as a whole. In the account of the desert wanderings, the Sinai events seem to be a distinct tradition incorporated into Kadesh material. The Israelites moved to Kadesh after crossing the sea, made a long detour to Sinai, and then returned to Kadesh. There are Kadesh narratives (Exod.17–18 and Num.10–14) enclosing Sinai material

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[41] *Letter of Aristeas* 100. There is no agreement on the date of this text.
[42] Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.6.7.
[43] F. M. Cross, 'The Song of the Sea' in *God and Christ* ed. R. Funk, 1968.
[44] See above, p.49.

(Exod.19–24 and 32–34), and there is the vestige of another lawgiving at Kadesh which Moses immediately implemented before they moved to Sinai (Exod.15.25; 18.15-16).[45]

The Enoch tradition tells the other story: the *Apocalypse of Weeks* describes how the Law was given, but without mentioning Egypt and the Exodus. No place is named for this lawgiving, and no person, only that 'visions of the holy ones and the righteous ones' were seen.[46] Now the main biblical accounts of Sinai do not mention angels, but there are several references to them in the New Testament. Stephen reminded the Sanhedrin that the Law had been given by angels (Acts 7.53); Paul said the Law was given by angels (Gal.3.19), as did the writer of Hebrews (Heb.2.2).[47] If the *Blessing of Moses* had originally described lawgiving in the time of the divine kings, then angels were very much in evidence – ten thousands of holy ones and the Lady at the right hand of the LORD – which would explain the later memory of angels when the Law was given. The *Blessing of Moses* says that the LORD came from Sinai, but does not reveal where the LORD went and where he became king and blessed the tribes. This information is found in Psalm 68, as we shall see.

Another question is the name of the mountain where the Law was given: in the 'priestly' material the name is Sinai, but in the D material it is Horeb. Were there two mountains, or was the name changed? Horeb in Hebrew means the desert place, or the place of smiting, the verb used in Deuteronomy 33.3: 'His anger smote ...' Tradition said that Horeb was the older name – 'because desolation, *ḥrbh*, descended there on idolaters' – and the mountain was renamed Sinai after Moses had seen the burning bush.[48] Sinai, *sînay*, is very similar in sound to the word translated burning 'bush', *s^{e}neh* – thought to be a thorny bush such as a blackberry. The opposite is more likely to have been the case: Sinai renamed Horeb. A deity named *šok^{e}nî s^{e}neh* is mentioned in the *Blessing of Moses* and translated 'he that dwelt in the bush' (Deut.33.16, AV and RSV), but the form *šok^{e}nî* is written like an archaic feminine form[49] and so the name could be translated '*she* who dwelt in the bush', the Lady. In the *Blessing of Moses* s/he is associated with fertility:

> Blessed by the LORD be his land,
> With the choicest gifts of heaven and with dew ...

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[45] For an account of these problems, see G. von Rad, 'The Problem of the Hexateuch' in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966, pp.1–78.
[46] *1 Enoch* 93.6.
[47] There is a possible reference in Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.5.3.
[48] Babylonian Talmud *Shabbat* 89b.
[49] See above on Shaddai, a similar form, p.132.

With the best gifts of the earth and its fullness
And the favour of the one who dwelt in the bush.[50] (Deut.33.13, 16)

Shaddai was also associated with fertility and was the original voice from the bush.[51] It may be that D used the name Horeb because Sinai was associated with the Lady of the bush. 'She that dwelt in the bush' is still remembered in the titles and ikons of Mary. Sometimes she is depicted as the bush itself and sometimes she is seated in the burning bush and holding her Son.[52] Nor was the significance of the blackberry bush forgotten: the red wool tied to the horns of the sin-bearing goat on the day of atonement was removed when the animal had been led into the desert, and left [as an offering?] on a blackberry bush before the goat was driven away.[53]

Horeb in Hebrew means 'the waste/dry place', but in Egyptian means 'the mountain of God', as stated in Exodus 3.1: '[Moses] came to Horeb, the mountain of God'. Since Horeb is used only in the D writings, it may be that Deuteronomy, with its emphasis on the Exodus, retained the Egyptian name of the mountain. The contexts in which Horeb is used are significant, and reveal the characteristic concerns of the D writers. Horeb, for example, was the place where the people were grumbling because they had no water, and here the concerns of the D writer are clear. The LORD spoke to Moses from a rock on Horeb and told him to strike the rock to bring forth water. Water flowed, and Moses called the place Massah and Meribah, meaning 'Proof' and 'Contention' (Exod.17.1-7). A duplicate of this story, thought to be the older version, is found in Numbers 20, and it does not mention Horeb. The people were grumbling because they had no water, and so Moses and Aaron went to the door of the tent of meeting. The glory of the LORD appeared to them, and they were told to strike the rock. Water flowed, and they named the place Meribah (Num.20.1-13). The 'Horeb' version characteristically does not say that the glory was seen, only that a voice was heard.

Later tradition recognised that the second story had a significant context, that it was a text with a double meaning. Miriam had died and was buried at Kadesh. Immediately, there was no water (Num.20.1-2). Why? Folk memory said that Miriam had supplied water from her miraculous well that travelled with them. According to the Babylonian Talmud, three good things were given to the people in the wilderness because of the merits of their three leaders: the pillar of cloud for Aaron, the manna for Moses, and the water for Miriam.[54] When she died, the people had no water. According

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[50] 'The one who dwelt in the bush' has been seen as a problem: BHS proposes Sinai, *sny* instead of bush, *snh*. LXX has 'the one seen in the bush'. The Samaritan text recognised the problem and has *skn*, clearly a masculine form.

[51] See below, p.187.

[52] We shall return to this in volume 2.

[53] *Letter of Barnabas* 7.

[54] Babylonian Talmud *Ta'anit* 9a.

to the great commentary on Exodus, Moses represented kingship, Aaron represented priesthood, and Miriam, *the older sister*, represented Wisdom.[55] Since one of the symbols of Wisdom was water, when Miriam died, the people had no more water. Many of the old patterns and the power struggles of the second temple era are encoded into the Pentateuch, which tells the stories on at least two levels, as we shall see.[56] Here, Moses begins to give the water/Wisdom that had formerly been given by the Lady: Miriam/Wisdom. The D writer's version of the story in Exodus 17 makes the same point but in a different way and without linking it to Miriam. Before Moses reached the holy mountain to receive the commandments, he heard the LORD standing on a rock at Horeb, struck the dry rock and water flowed. Thus the gift of water/Wisdom was linked to Horeb, as we should expect, but was given before the ten commandments which were to replace Wisdom: '[The commandments] will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples ...' (Deut.4.6).

Horeb was also the place where the people of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments (Exod.33.1-6). The list given here of nations to be driven out of Canaan is a sure sign of the D writer, but nobody knows what was meant by 'the ornaments'. These were removed as a sign of mourning that the LORD had withdrawn his presence and would not himself accompany them into the promised land (Exod.33.6). This is a composite chapter, whose theme is how the LORD is present with his people, and the D writer denied the literal presence of the LORD.

Elsewhere in the D writings, this was expressed in the enigmatic statement that the LORD would put his Name in the place he chose (Deut.12.11), and in the prayer that the LORD would look down from heaven and bless his people and his land (Deut.26.15). When the D writer's Solomon prayed at the consecration of the temple, he denied that the LORD could dwell anywhere on earth (1 Kgs 8.27) and he emphasised that the ark contained 'nothing but the two stone tablets which Moses put there at Horeb' (1 Kgs 8.9; cf. Deut.10.1-5). Why this emphasis, comparable to the statement that the LORD added nothing to the revelation after the ten commandments (Deut.4.22)? The older tradition with the Lady had been that after 40 years of eating manna in the desert, Aaron put a jar of manna 'before the testimony' to be kept there (Exod.16.34); and that Aaron's rod that blossomed and bore almonds was also to be placed 'before the testimony' (Num.17.10). The writer of Hebrews understood that the pot of manna and Aaron's rod had been *in* the ark – presumably that is how these texts were understood at the end of the second temple era (Heb.9.4). The Babylonian Talmud adds that the oil was also hidden away with the ark: 'At the time when the holy ark was hidden way, there was also hidden the anointing oil, the jar of manna and

[55] *Exodus Rabbah* XLVIII.4.
[56] See below, pp.329, 333.
[57] Babylonian Talmud *Horayoth* 12a.

Aaron's rod with its blossoms.'[57] What did the D writer find unacceptable about the manna, Aaron's rod with its almond blossoms, and possibly the holy oil? They were all, as we shall see, associated with the Lady and her son the Messiah, and that is why the D writer was so emphatic that the ark held nothing but the two tablets of stone. Folk memory, however, was different.

When Elijah fled from Jezebel, after his contest on Carmel with the prophets of Baal, he went to Horeb, the mountain of God (1 Kgs 19.8), where he did not see the LORD, but heard only a 'still small voice' after the storm (1 Kgs 19.12). The D writer included the prophets of Asherah in the story (1 Kgs 18.19), but they are clearly an addition.[58] Elijah is presented as an opponent of Asherah, even though Jehu, whom he anointed as the next king, wiped out the worship of Baal but took no action against Asherah (2 Kgs 10.24-28). The D writer deliberately associated Asherah with Baal in order to discredit her, but other early sources do not link her to Baal.[59]

Most significant of all is the fact that Horeb was the place where Moses saw the burning bush and was told that in future the God of Israel would have a new name: the LORD (Exod.3.15).[60] The God of the fathers is here unnamed, but under the newly revealed name he would bring Israel out of Egypt and lead them to Canaan. For the D writer, history began with the Exodus and the Name revealed at the bush. This passage is recognised as the point where the saga and religion of the patriarchs were joined to and superseded by the saga and religion of Moses, and it happened at Horeb, where the new name of Israel's God was announced. The priestly account of the call of Moses is more explicit about the change of name: 'I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as El Shaddai, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan ...' (Exod.6.3-4). Now the *Blessing of Moses*, as we have seen, mentions the blessing of the one who dwells in the bush. This must have been Shaddai, who spoke to Moses from the bush and announced the new name. At the point where the religion of the patriarchs was superseded by the religion of Moses, Shaddai lost her original name and became the LORD. At the same point, as we shall see, Shaddai's eternal covenant made with the patriarchs was superseded by the conditional Moses covenant with the ten commandments, and both the Lady and her covenant vanished – at least from the way the Hebrew Bible was subsequently read.

The other name for the holy mountain was Sinai, correctly 'the mountain of Sinai', which may indicate that Sinai was the name of the region whilst Horeb was the actual mountain.[61] This name is used throughout Exodus,

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[58] See above, p.84.
[59] See above, p.41n.
[60] The initial revelation was the threefold name, *'ehyeh 'ašer 'ehyeh*, usually translated 'I am who I am', Exod.3.14.
[61] See *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 'Sinai'.

Leviticus and Numbers and in some other interesting contexts. The name is found in the *Song of Deborah* (Judg.5.5), where Sinai quaked before the Lord as he approached to help the army of Deborah and Barak. Now Deborah was a woman prophet, who sat under a palm tree and judged Israel. She was *'ēšet lappîdôt*, 'the wife of Lapidoth' (Judg.4.4) which is an otherwise unknown name. It is more likely that the Hebrew means the Lady of the lightnings/flames/torches, since *lpyd* means a torch or flame or flash of lightning, and the word is found in some interesting contexts: the *flaming torch* that appeared to Abram when he made the covenant with [Shaddai] (Gen.15.17); the thunder and *lightnings* of the theophany on Sinai (Exod.20.18); the *torches* at the heart of the chariot throne that Ezekiel saw (Ezek.1.13); the *burning torch* of Jerusalem's salvation (Isa.62.1); the *flaming torch* among the sheaves defending Jerusalem (Zech.12.6); and the *torch-like* eyes of the angel figure who spoke to Daniel (Dan.10.6), whom Ezekiel had seen and recognised as the Lord.[62] The 'Lady of the Torches' would be a better description of Deborah than 'the wife of Lapidoth',[63] and she sat under her palm tree. Now engraved palm trees and cherubim were the main decoration in Solomon's temple (1 Kgs 6.29-35), and palm trees the main decoration in Ezekiel's (Ezek.41.15-26). There were also palm trees on the temple stands (1 Kgs 7.36). It may be significant that Deborah sat under a palm tree, especially as the Asherah cult stand, also decorated with palms, was found at Ta'anach, the site of Deborah's battle (Judg.5.19) and of Asherah's cult.[64] Whom, then, did Deborah represent, defending her people? Whom did the warrior Lord come to help?

The name Sinai also occurs in Psalm 68, of which it has been said: 'In no other psalm are the various attempts at interpretation so diverse ... [this is a] severely corrupted text.'[65] Much of it is similar to the *Song of Deborah*: a theophany with rain, a battle scene, Sinai quaking; and then there is Shaddai scattering kings in battle (Ps.68.14). When the subject is the divine chariot, the text becomes opaque, v.17: 'A chariot of twice ten thousand *'elohîm*, the thousands of *šn'n*.' Two consecutive lines have similar sounding words: Sinai preceded by the difficult word *šn'n*, [pronounced shin'an] meaning repetition, or it could have been *š'wn*, [pronounced sha'on] meaning roaring sound of waters or of battle; or *š'nn*, [pronounced *ša'anān*], meaning one who is free from misfortune; or *šin'ān*, meaning shining or glorious.[66] The Lxx understood it to be 'free from misfortune' and translated as *euthēnountes*, but the presence of the name Shaddai makes 'roaring waters' or 'shining' the

[62] See my book *The Great Angel*, London: SPCK, 1992, p.74. John saw the same figure and recognised him as the risen Lord, Rev.1.12.

[63] *lpydwt*, is a feminine plural from, but elsewhere the plural is masculine, *lpydym*.

[64] See above, pp.154–63.

[65] A. Weiser, *The Psalms*, London: SCM, 1962, p.481.

[66] J. A. Emerton, 'The Meaning of ŠĒNĀ' in Psalm CXXVII 2', Vetus Testamentum XXIV.1 (1974), pp.15–31, p.30.

more likely meanings. The wings of the heavenly beings that Ezekiel heard made a sound 'like the sound of many waters, like the sound of Shaddai, the sound of a [rain] storm, the sound of a host' (Ezek.1.24, my translation). The chariot Ezekiel saw leaving the temple was the chariot that this psalm describes arriving in the temple. Psalm 68.17a would then be: 'With the chariot of twice ten thousand *'elohîm*, the thousands of the shining one' or 'the thousands [who make the] roaring sound of waters'.

The second part of the verse is also problematic, but seems to be the information not given in the *Blessing of Moses*: where did the LORD go when he came from Sinai with his angels and the Lady? 'The Lord came from Sinai into the holy place' (Ps.68.17b, RSV). Or 'the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place' (Ps.68.17b, AV). The LXX understood it to be: 'the LORD among them in Sinai, in the holy place', but the difficult Hebrew *bm syny*, 'among them Sinai', is often emended to *b' msyny*, 'he came from Sinai'. And finally there is *bqdš*, which could be read as 'in/into the holy place', which makes sense; or 'with the Holy One/Qudshu', which corresponds to the presence of Asherah in the *Blessing of Moses*; or 'as the Holy One/Qudshu', using the title so frequently found in Isaiah; or to the Holy One/Qudshu. The state of the text suggests that something deemed blasphemous was obscured: the chariot throne with the angels, perhaps, or the Lady who accompanied the LORD when he came from Sinai as in the *Blessing of Moses*, or perhaps the implication that the God and king who entered the holy place was in fact the LORD coming from Sinai.

> They have seen thy goings O God [*'elohîm*]
> The goings of my God [El], my king, *bqdš*
> The singers in front, the minstrels last
> Between them maidens playing timbrels. (Ps.68.24-25, translating literally)

The procession described here, like the LORD with his angels in the *Blessing of Moses*, was *bqdš*, and so whatever this meant in the 'heavenly' procession was presumably what it meant in the earthly. The Lord who came from Sinai to the holy place, or with Qudshu, was the divine king who came into the holy place. Whatever the cultic reality, this psalm described the angel chariot, which Ezekiel also attempted to describe:

> With the chariot of twice ten thousand *'elohîm*,
> the thousands of the shining one [or who make the roaring sound of waters],
> the Lord came from Sinai with/as Qudshu/ into the holy place. (Ps.68.17, my translation)

The LORD coming in his chariot to the holy place is found in later texts, although the age of the tradition is not known. According to the *Apocalypse*

of Moses, when the LORD returned to Eden to judge Adam for his disobedience, the archangel sounded his trumpet and the human pair hid. 'And God returned to Paradise, seated on a chariot of cherubim, and the angels were praising him.' The [chariot] throne settled under the tree of life.[67] Thus too in the Enoch tradition: the tree of life was the place where the LORD settled in Paradise.[68] This was Ezekiel's chariot throne, but here it was established in Eden, that is, in the temple. Now the throne under the tree of life in the holy of holies is an image familiar to Christians: John saw the throne of God-and-the-Lamb[69] and the tree of life in the heavenly city (Rev.22.1-2), a golden cube which represented the holy of holies (Rev.21.10-21, esp. v.16). The heavenly throne was always a chariot, and the tree of life beside it, as we shall see,[70] was a symbol of the Lady, 'the tree of life to those who hold on to her ...' (Prov.3.18, my translation).

Piecing together images from the *Blessing of Moses*, Psalm 68, Revelation 22, the various passages in the New Testament that mention the Law given by angels, the lawgiving in Enochic *Apocalypse of Weeks*, and the chariot throne in Eden in the *Apocalypse of Moses*, it is possible to reconstruct the original Sinai theophany; the LORD came as a warrior figure with his army of angels; he became king and gave his Law; and there was the Lady at his right hand. The final chapter of Zechariah is a collection of oracles describing this day, which had become his hope for the future. 'On that day' the LORD would become king over all the earth (Zech.14.9); on that day the whole land would become a plain and only Jerusalem remain as a high place (Zech.14.10); and all those who survived the judgement would go each year to Jerusalem to keep the feast of Tabernacles and to worship the King the LORD of Hosts (Zech.14.16-17). But on that day also 'living waters shall flow from Jerusalem' (Zech.14.8), and the living waters were a symbol of the Lady.

It is likely that the temple ceremony corresponding to the lawgiving was Tabernacles, since this was the time when the Law was read (Deut.31.10; Neh.7.73–8.18). In the Moses story, he ascended Sinai to receive the Law three months after leaving Egypt, in other words, at Weeks/Pentecost (Exod.19.1), and was on the mountain for six days before the LORD spoke to him, and then forty days and nights (Exod.24.15-18).[71] Whichever festival it represented, a temple setting is very clear in this account even if the precise regulations are not: the state of ritual purity (Exod.19.10-11, 14-15); trumpets (Exod.19.13, 16, 19; 20.18); eating a special meal in the presence of the *'ᵉlohîm* (God? or those angels? Exod.24.11); sacrifice

[67] *Apocalypse of Moses* 22, in OTP vol.2, p.281.
[68] *2 Enoch* 8.3.
[69] John's way of describing the human who had become divine.
[70] See above, p.73–4.
[71] Whether the 40 nights was in addition to the 6 or it was 40 in total is not clear.

and blood sprinkling (Exod.24.3-8); proclamation of the Law (Exod.20.1-17); and designating the mountain a holy area that people could not enter (Exod.19.12-13, 21-24). It seems that Aaron could walk on the holy mountain with Moses only after the trumpet had sounded. 'When the trumpet sounds a long blast [the people] shall come up to the mountain' (Exod.19.13). 'And he said to Moses: "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship afar off. Moses alone shall come near to the LORD; but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him"' (Exod.24.1-2). At this point in the narrative, Aaron has not been made high priest, and so the division here is that of the temple: the high priest [or king] entering the divine presence, the priests staying at a distance [that is, outside the holy of holies], and the people completely excluded from the holy place.

John received a similar summons: a sound like a trumpet spoke to him and said 'Come up hither and I will show you what must take place after this' (Rev.4.2). John then found himself 'in the Spirit' and standing before the heavenly throne which was surrounded by 'many angels, myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands' (Rev.5.11). He saw the human being [the Lamb] approach the throne, receive the scroll [or book] and take his place on the throne. As he opened the book, so the judgement unfolded from heaven to earth, and John watched. His vision encompassed the Lady giving birth to her son in the holy of holies (Rev.12.1-6); the armies of heaven and the Bride of the Lamb (Rev.19.6-16); the new Jerusalem like the holy of holies – a golden cube but also called the Bride of the Lamb (Rev.21.9-21) – and finally the throne and the tree of life (Rev.22.1-2). When he was on Patmos, John assembled all the early Christian prophecies that became the Book of Revelation, and his inspiration was to present them within the framework of the old temple ritual: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our LORD and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever' (Rev.11.15).

The prophets knew of a temple ceremony when the Law was given, but they named the mountain Zion, not Horeb or Sinai. This is the opening oracle of Isaiah:[72]

> It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD,
> Shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills;
> And all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come and say:
> 'Come let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, the house of the God of Jacob,

[72] Isaiah 1 is thought to be a preface to the final collection of the oracles, chapter 2 the start of the earliest collection.

that he may teach us his ways, and that we may walk in his paths.'
For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Isa.2.2-3)

Most of the references to the holy mountain are in Isaiah (Isa.11.9; 27.13; 56.7; 57.13; 65.11,25; 66.20), perhaps because he was a prophet in Jerusalem and closely associated with the temple.[73] Isaiah and his contemporary Micah also described the holy mountain as 'the mountain of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem' (Isa.10.32, also 16.1); or the hill, *'opel*, [Ophel] of the daughter of Zion (Mic.4.8) to which the former kingdom would return. *It was not only the LORD of Hosts who lived and reigned on the holy hill.* The holy mountain in Jerusalem was the home of the Lady, and one of Isaiah's disciples, writing two centuries later, would describe the harlot on the hill who had ousted the Lady.

Her mountain was literally the temple mount in Jerusalem, but it represented the cosmic mountain at the centre of creation. 'The West Semitic world was dominated by the mental construction of Mount Saphon. This was a "mountain of the mind", a high point of refuge, which could be variously identified wherever people went.'[74] The name is variously thought to mean 'north', or 'hidden'[75] or 'the place whence [God] looks out'.[76] The temple on this mountain was the meeting point of heaven and earth: 'The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven ...' (Ps.11.4); '[The LORD] answers me from his holy mountain' (Ps.3.4, translating literally; so too Pss.15.1; 24.3; 43.3; 99.9). The temple mount was also the first dry land from which creation was established: 'He stretches out Saphon over the primeval waste, he hangs the earth upon nothing' (Job 26.7, my translation). There had been a rock in the holy of holies since the time of the kings, known as the foundation stone, *'eben shetiyah*, on which the ark had once been set,[77] and this was both the first dry land to be created and the place of the chariot throne. The LORD reigned at the heart and origin of creation, and his throne, as we shall see, was his Mother.[78] The holy mountain as dry land in the centre of the primeval sea survived in biblical imagery. *The Song of the Sea* describes the Exodus, the people passing through the turbulent waters and then being brought to safety 'on thy own mountain ... the sanctuary, O LORD, which thy hands have established' (Exod.15.17). The psalmist sang: 'The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king for ever' (Ps.29.10); and Isaiah spoke of 'the king in his beauty ... the LORD

[73] References elsewhere e.g. Ezek.20.40; 28.14; Joel 2.1; 3.17; Obad.16; Zeph.3.11; Zech.8.3.
[74] N. Wyatt, *Space and Time in the Religious life of the Ancient Near East*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001, p.147.
[75] BDB, op.cit., n.2 above, p.860.
[76] From the root *ṣph*, look out or keep watch, see Wyatt, op.cit., n.74, p.149.
[77] Mishnah *Yoma* 5.2.
[78] See volume 2.

in majesty ... in a place of broad rivers and streams' (Isa.33.17, 21). This was never literally Jerusalem. Ezekiel's Eden was a place where the god-king sat on his throne 'in the heart of the seas' (Ezek.28.2, 13); and when the archangel Michael was leading Adam from Paradise, he touched the waters around Paradise, and they froze so to allow them to cross.[79] John saw the heavenly throne set in a sea like crystal and he saw the faithful standing on its shore (Rev.4.6; 15.2).

It was, however, literally Jerusalem where the LORD became the Davidic king. The son of the LORD, that is, his human aspect, was set on Zion (Ps.2.6), 'begotten' from 'Womb', a vestige of one of the Lady's titles, and named the Morning Star, Melchizedek (Ps.110.2-4).[80] Zion was also known as 'his holy mountain ... Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great king' (Ps.48.1-2). Isaiah knew of 'the mount of assembly in the far north' (Isa.14.13), where the rebel star tried to set his throne but was cast down. He also spoke of 'the LORD of Hosts who dwells on Mount Zion' (Isa.8.18); of the LORD of Hosts who would reign on Mount Zion after the great judgement (Isa.24.23). There the Daughter of Zion scorned the Assyrians (Isa.37.22); and there, after their defeat, there would be a temple festival with music on the mountain of the LORD, when the voice of the LORD had been heard and the power of his arm revealed (Isa.30.29). Exiles from Egypt and Assyria would return to worship the LORD on the holy mountain at Jerusalem (Isa.27.13), returning to be suckled by their Mother – the ancient image of the deity with breasts (Isa.66.10-14). Isaiah also knew that Paradise would be restored on/as the holy mountain. After the chosen ruler had been anointed with the Spirit: 'They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea' (Isa.11.9; cf. 65.25). Wisdom would return.

Isaiah's contemporary Micah has left a glimpse of the temple in the eighth century BCE in his dramatic oracle of doom; it was the temple of Mother, Father and Son, but all embedded within bitter wordplay as 'Field', 'Ruins' and 'Wood'. He warned the rulers who perverted justice and the priests and prophets who abused their position that the temple mount would be destroyed because of their behaviour.

> Therefore because of you,
> Zion shall be ploughed as a *field*;
> Jerusalem shall become a heap of *ruins*,
> And the mountain of the house a *wooded* height. (Mic.3.12)

Jeremiah repeated this prophecy a century later, reminding the leaders in Jerusalem that their way of living would bring disaster (Jer.26.16-19). The

[79] *Life of Adam and Eve*, 29.3.
[80] See above, pp.125, 133.

temple that Micah knew underlies his complex wordplay on 'because of you' *big^{e}lalkem* which can also mean 'because of your idols'; and 'ploughed' *ḥrš*, also means 'engrave', and so the change to the city would be engraved as an eternal change. His oracle of doom was about the temple for Shaddai, [*śdh* also meaning 'field'], El Elyon [almost *ʿîyîn* meaning ruins] and the watching Angel [almost *yʿr* meaning wooded]. He was warning that the temple for the Mother, Father and Son would be changed eternally into a field, a ruin and a wooded height. Hence the Second Isaiah's contradiction of this in his oracle of hope for Jerusalem: 'I have graven you on the palms of my hands, your walls are continually before me' (Isa.49.16).

- Field, as we have seen, is written in the same way as Shaddai in an unpointed text.
- Ruins, *ʿîyîn* was an editorial comment on 'Elyon', *ʿelyôn*, meaning Most High. Solomon's prayer at the consecration of the temple has the same wordplay. The current Hebrew is '... this house will be most high', *ʿlywn*, and people will say: 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land and this house?' (1 Kgs 9.8; 2 Chron.7.21). The Syriac, the Old Latin and the Targum here presuppose 'ruins', *lʿyyn*: 'This house shall be ruins ... Why has the Lord done thus to this land and this house?' which is better sense. The original text played on *ʿlywn* and *lʿyyn*, consistent with the rules for the correcting scribes: the same number of letters, and exchanging one '*y*' for '*w*', which look very similar in second-temple Hebrew script.
- Wooded heights, *bāmôt yaʿar*,[81] is wordplay on *bāmôt hāʿîr*, the high place of the watcher, the ancient guardian angel of the city. The high places of the Lord had been places of worship in the time of the kings, until they were destroyed by Josiah: Solomon, for example, went to the great high place at Gibeon to pray for wisdom (1 Kgs 3.4-15). The change is from *yʿr*, wooded, to *ʿyr*, watching angel. The third Isaiah had summoned the living creatures of Shaddai and the living creatures of *yʿr*, to attack the worthless new leaders in Jerusalem (Isa.56.9),[82] and there too these words *śdh* and *yʿr* are usually translated 'field' and 'forest' rather than 'Shaddai' and 'watching angel'.

Micah's oracle of doom was that the temple for Shaddai, El Elyon and the watching Angel, would become forever a field, a ruin and a wooded height. The same three appear in Psalm 91: 'He who dwells in the shelter of Elyon, who abides in the shadow of Shaddai, says to the Lord "My refuge and my fortress ..."' (Ps.91.1-2, my translation). The wordplay is too precise and too consistent for this to be coincidence.

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[81] Some ancient versions suggest reading *bmt*, a construct singular.
[82] See above, p.68.

When the exiles returned to Jerusalem, there was bitter dispute about the legitimate priesthood and access to the holy mountain. The Third Isaiah proclaimed that the holy mountain was currently possessed by people who were a travesty of its legitimate occupants, and ended one of his most bitter condemnations thus: 'But he who takes refuge in me shall inherit, *nḥl*, the land, and shall possess, *yrš*, the mountain of my sanctuary' (Isa.57.13b, my translation; cf. Isa.62.9, 'my sanctuary'). This prophet also used wordplay throughout the passage, and beneath it we glimpse the harlot on the holy hill who had replaced the Lady, and her children, the priests, who were a disgrace. The whole of Isaiah 57.3-10 is obscure; the literal translation offered by the AV shows clearly that it makes no obvious sense. What, then, was the prophet saying? In the manner that characterised the Isaiah prophets in particular, he was describing the current situation by distorting a description of the true cult.

The context for Third Isaiah's condemnation is found in the opening chapters of Proverbs, where the writer warned his son to resist this other woman and be attentive to Wisdom:

You will be saved from the strange woman,
From the foreign woman with her smooth, *ḥlq*, words,
Who forsakes the teacher of her youth
And forgets the covenant of her God, *'elohîm*,
For her house/temple sinks down to death
And her wide paths to the Rephaim;
None who go to her come back
Nor do they return to the broad paths of life. (Prov.2.16-19, my translation)

Death, *môt*, and the Rephaim/shades, *r^epā'îm*, appear elsewhere in parallel: 'Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the *r^epā'îm* rise up [i.e. are they resurrected] and give you thanks?' (Ps.88.10, my translation). The strange woman with her smooth words has a temple and wide paths that lead to death, from which none returns.

Wisdom, in contrast, offers the opposite:

Happy is the one who finds Wisdom ...
Long life is in her right hand
In her left hand are riches and honour
Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace.
She is the tree of life to those who lay hold of her
Those who hold her fast are called happy, *m'šr*.[83] (Prov.3.13, 16-18)

[83] Echoes again of the name Ashratah.

The Wisdom texts from Qumran expand on this contrast between the two women, Wisdom and her opposite,[84] and a fragment of poetry survives in *1 Enoch* contrasting the two: Wisdom found no place on earth and returned to heaven, and Iniquity took her place.[85] The new woman was the figure Zechariah saw returning from Babylon. In a parody of the Lady leaving her city,[86] he saw 'Wickedness' return, enthroned in an ephah, the symbol of unjust trade, and supported by moneylenders (Zech.5.5-11).[87] The angel who spoke through the prophet told him that the woman would return to Babylon, where they would build a temple for her.

This is the context for reading Isaiah 57, under whose bitter words we glimpse the rejected Lady. 'Those who draw near' (Isa.57.3) are priests, 'draw near' being a technical term in Ezekiel and the priestly writings that means to approach the holy place with offerings.[88] In the time of the third Isaiah, there was great emphasis on purity of descent for the priests (Ezra 2.62-63), and so the prophet's words were apt: he said the priests in his time were the seed of 'an adulterer and harlot', reading *mn'pt wznh* for the MT *mn'p wtznh*, and they were the sons of a sorceresss, '*on*^{e}*nāh*. These letters also mean 'cloud' *'*^{a}*nānāh* (Job 3.5), more often written *'ānān*, the cloud that accompanied a theophany. This wordplay implies that the true priests had been described as the children of the faithful Lady and the sons of the cloud. Wordplay like this is found in Revelation, where the harlot is described as 'mother of harlots and earth's abominations' (Rev.17.5). In the Hebrew that underlies the Greek text of Revelation,[89] these would have been *qdšm* and *mšḥtm*, meaning prostitutes and abominations, wordplay on *qdšm* and *mšyḥm* holy ones and anointed ones. At his transfiguration, Jesus was described as the son of a cloud: 'And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him"' (Mk 9.7). Mark does not say whose voice spoke to the disciples; it is always assumed that this was the voice of the Father, but the voice that spoke at Jesus' baptism was remembered as the voice of his Mother, the Holy Spirit.[90] We shall return to the cloud as a symbol of the Lady.[91]

These new priests had burned with lust among the oaks, under every green tree, and had killed their children in the valleys under the clefts of the rocks (Isa.57.5). The word translated 'those who burn with lust', *hnḥmym*, is found only here in the Hebrew Bible and could also be read as 'those who

[84] 4Q 184.
[85] *1 Enoch* 42.1-3, see above, p.67.
[86] See above, pp.67, 143.
[87] We shall explore this wordplay in volume 2.
[88] BDB, n.2 above, p.898.
[89] Arguments for a Hebrew and Aramaic text, but not this particular example, in C. C. Torrey, *The Apocalypse of John*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958, *passim*.
[90] See volume 2.
[91] See below, pp.264–70.

comfort themselves'.[92] The word *b'lym* also has several possible meanings: 'with idols' (AV) or 'among the oaks' (RSV) or even 'with the angels'. The patriarchs had met with angels under great trees. The trees and child sacrifice indicate that the cult of the Lady is the framework for this passage, although what the new priests were doing is not clear as the vital word is not known elsewhere.

The prophet then speaks to an unnamed female figure, the harlot making one of her earliest appearances in Scripture (Isa.57.6-13). She is the notorious woman whom John later saw in his vision, first decked in her finery (Rev.17.1-6) and then being destroyed (Rev.18.1–19.3). The Lady of Jerusalem ousted by a harlot is a major theme of Isaiah, as set out in the first chapter of the book which is the preface to the completed collection: 'How the faithful city has become a harlot, she that was full of justice' (Isa.1.21). As in the Book of Revelation, so here also, the words used to describe the harlot are very similar to those used for the Lady.

The harlot had taken over the Lady's mountain. She set her bed, *miškāb*, on a high, *gbh*, and lofty, *nś'*, mountain, rather than the Lady's *miškān*, dwelling or tabernacle [from *škn*, whence Shekinah] on the high and lofty mountain. High, *gbh*, and lofty, *nś'*, are the words Isaiah used to describe the Servant: 'My servant ... shall be exalted and *lifted up* and *very high*' (Isa.52.13, my translation), and they must have had some temple significance. The wordplay continues: 'Among the smooth stones, *ḥlq*, of the valley, *nḥl*, is your portion, *ḥlq*, they, they are your lot, *gwrl*' (Isa.57.6). Here *ḥlq* means both portion and slippery, including slippery words as in: 'He *flatters* himself in his own eyes, that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated' (Ps.36.2); or slippery places, as in: 'Truly thou dost set them in *slippery* places; thou dost make them fall to ruin' (Ps.73.18). Smooth words were characteristic of the strange woman (Prov.2.16). The word *nḥl* means both inherit and wadi; and *gwrl* means both allotment and stony place. Such wordplay is beyond translation, but is evidence for the false claims and smooth words of the harlot and her priests. They were not a new phenomenon: Isaiah had spoken against such people who did not want to hear from seers and prophets, but said: 'Speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions' (Isa.30.10); and the *Damascus Document* identified them as the unfaithful ones in the age of wrath, who sought smooth things and broke the covenant.[93] This is a bitter parody of the ways of the Lady, something confirmed by reference to the drink offering and the cereal offering which were characteristic of her cult.[94]

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[92] 'Burn with lust from the root *ḥmm*, be warm; comfort themselves from the root *nḥm*.

[93] CD II.

[94] P. D. Hanson *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975 first drew attention to this wordplay, and I have added more examples. 'This is no objective description of a cultic practice, but rather a highly sardonical paronomasia used to ridicule the cult of those being attacked', p.198.

Behind the door and the doorpost the harlot has set her *zikkārôn*, (Isa.57.8), a word derived from *zkr*, which can mean either 'remembrance/memorial' or 'male'. 'Symbol' (RSV) is only a conjecture. The verbal form also means 'invoke'. To appreciate the wordplay here, it is necessary to look at some aspects of the cult of the Lady. Her devotees had offered wine and incense and had eaten 'cakes' to represent her (Jer.44.19); and one of the eloquent silences of the Hebrew Bible is the purpose of the table in the tabernacle/temple for incense, libations and the bread of the presence (Exod.25.23-30), which are evidence for her cult in the temple. Leviticus 24.7 describes the bread of the presence as a memorial/invocation offering, *'azkārāh*. The bread was eaten by the priests as their most holy food, meaning that it imparted holiness to them. The Hebrew text actually says of the bread: 'and *she* shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place since it is a most holy for him ...' (Lev.24.9, translating literally).[95] She? Bread is a masculine noun, so the verb does not refer directly to the bread. Now the *'azkārāh* offering and the *zikkārôn* which the harlot had behind her door, derive from the same root *zkr*, and here is the prophet's wordplay. The cereal offering of *zikkārôn* was offered when a woman was suspected of adultery. Behind the door and doorpost of the harlot was not the bread of the presence that imparted holiness to the priests, but 'the cereal offering of remembrance, *zikkārôn*, to remember her iniquity' (Num.5.15, 18).

The Lady had summoned people to her house, to eat her bread and drink her wine. In this way they would leave the foolish ones and live, and walk straight, *'šr* [like Ashratah], in the way of insight (Prov.9.5-6):

> Happy is the person who listens to me,
> Watching by my *doors* each day,
> Guarding the *posts* of my doorway. (Prov.8.34, my translation)

The harlot had set her *zikkārôn* behind her door and her doorpost. She offered her followers not the bread of insight nor even the bread of invocation, but the *zikkārôn*. The verse continues, elaborating on the theme of the harlot's infidelity:

> Deserting me [literally 'from me'] you have uncovered, *glh*,[96] your bed, *mškb*,
> You have gone up, *'lh*, to it,
> You have made it wide, *rḥb*,
> And you have made a bargain, *krt*, for yourself with them

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[95] Targums *Onkelos* and *Neofiti* to Lev.24.7 show that the bread of the presence in the temple/tabernacle was a memorial/invocation offering, and this was eaten by the priests as their most holy food, that is, to impart holiness to them. See my book *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, London: T&T Clark, 2007, pp.210–11.

[96] I give the root of the verb only.

You have loved their bed, *mškb*,
You have looked on, *ḥzh*, nakedness. (Isa.57.8b)

Each of the emphasised words either has another meaning in the temple cult, or sounds like such a word; the text is corrupt in places, and the Lxx resorted to a paraphrase.

- Uncovered, *glh*, your bed, *mškb*, plays on 'revealed your sanctuary *mškn*' or 'gone into exile from your dwelling place'.[97] You have gone up, *'lh*, can also mean ascend, in the sense of entering a sacred place, or leave, in which case the lines would be 'You have gone into exile from me and left me.' As we shall see, Ezekiel described the Lady leaving her sanctuary, rising from the temple and going into exile.[98]
- You have made wide, *rḥb*, here used of the bed, is used elsewhere by Isaiah to describe the future prosperity and happiness of the Lady and her sanctuary: '*Enlarge* the place of your tent ... your descendents will possess nations' (Isa.54.2-3); and then, as her children return 'Your heart shall be in awe and *be enlarged*' (Isa.60.5, my translation). The word also sounds like hover, *rḥp*, a rare word used for the hovering presence of the Lord (Deut.32.11) or of the Spirit (Gen.1.2), but this would normally require the preposition *'l*, upon. Hovering over the sanctuary is not an impossible conjecture, as can be seen from Ezekiel's description of the Lady and her cloud rising from the temple with the voice of El Shaddai, and rising over the eastern gate of the temple before departing (Ezek.10.1-18).
- 'Made a bargain' represents, *krt*, the technical term for making a covenant, literally 'cutting a covenant', but the word covenant is not here. The clause is thought to be corrupted, and at the very least requires an extra letter on the verb, *tkrt*, making *tkrty*, 'You [fem.] cut'. Nor is the construction 'from them', *mhm*, found elsewhere, and an alteration is proposed, *'mhm*, which gives the expected 'covenant with them'. If the verb were pointed as *niph'al*, however, *mhm* could remain and the line would be: 'You were cut off from them', a normal construction for anyone expelled from the community (e.g. Lev.7.20).
- In the last line *ḥzh* usually means to see as a seer or prophet, to see God (e.g. Exod.24.11) or to perceive. 'You (fem.) saw ...'. What she saw is not clear. Such seeing was both the characteristic and the gift of the Lady, but what the harlot 'saw' is not clear. The text says 'hand', but this must be either a corruption or a euphemism. Prophetic vision is not the usual occupation of a harlot.

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[97] Dwelling place, *škn*, as in Deut.12.5.
[98] See below, pp.248–50.

The next lines are also full of wordplay:

> You journeyed to Moloch/the king with oil
> And multiplied your perfumes;
> You sent your envoys far off,
> And sent them down even to Sheol. (Isa.57.9)

The letters translated 'to Moloch with oil' can also be understood: 'as the king with the oil', the act of anointing. The verb translated 'journeyed' assumes a root *šwr*, of unknown meaning and found only here and perhaps at Ezekiel 27.25.[99] 'Journey' then, is not a certain translation. Given that this passage is about the Lady, the original verb could well have been *'šr*, [pronounced 'ashar and sounding like Ashratah], meaning to walk straight, set right, bless, or declare happy, and 'You journeyed to Moloch with oil' could also be: 'You blessed/set on the right path [someone] as king with the oil.' This was said of the king in Psalm 72.17: 'May ... all nations call him *blessed*'. The harlot also 'made many' her perfumes, *rqḥyk*, a word used elsewhere of the perfumes of the holy oil and the holy incense of the tabernacle (Exod.30.25, 35). It was forbidden to use these special blends of perfume outside the tabernacle/temple, and Ben Sira's poem has Wisdom describe herself as sending forth these very perfumes:

> Like cassia and camel's thorn I gave forth the aroma of spices,
> and like choice myrrh I spread a pleasant odour,
> like galbanum, onycha, and stacte,
> and like the fragrance of frankincense in the tabernacle. (Ben Sira 24.15)

Isaiah was describing the harlot's use of her perfumes as a corruption of the Lady's use of perfume. The Lady had anointed the king with the perfumed oil that represented herself[100] and then sent him into the world as her son to uphold righteousness and equity, in other words, to uphold the covenant. This anointing is described in Isaiah 11, where the royal heir receives the sevenfold Spirit, described as 'his perfume, *ryḥ*'. 'And his perfume is the fear of the LORD' (Isa.11.3, translating literally). The birth of the son is described in Isaiah 9.6, where the Hebrew text has his four throne names: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Booty, Prince of Peace, which some versions of the LXX summarised as 'the Angel of Great Counsel' – Wisdom's son. The harlot also gave herself in her perfumes and then sent out her envoys, *ṣyr*, to a distance and as far as Sheol, just as the strange woman in Proverbs 2 had wide paths leading to death. The envoy, *ṣyr*, is perhaps

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[99] RSV translates 'travelled', but AV has 'sing'.
[100] See volume 2.

an allusion to the envoy to the nations, sent by the LORD and heard by the prophets: 'I have heard tidings from the LORD, and a messenger, *ṣyr*, has been sent among the nations' (Jer.49.14//Obad.1).

The Lady had reigned on the holy mountain until she was finally expelled by Josiah. There had been earlier attempts to expel her, but she had returned. Micah looked for the day of her return, when the Daughter of Zion would come back to her tower and her kingdom (Mic.4.8). So too did his contemporary Isaiah, or rather, his later disciples who assembled the oracles and inserted this prose section into the original poetry. The context in the collection is the judgement on those under the influence of fallen angels and then Isaiah's temple vision of the rejection of Wisdom and its consequences. When all this was set right again, the later disciple added:

> Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud, *'nn*, by day and smoke, *'šn*, and the brightness, *ngh*, of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory, *kbd*, there will be a canopy and a pavilion. It will be for a shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain. (Isa.4.5-6)[101]

The LXX in v.5 is different: 'He will come, and there will be a cloud by day overshadowing the whole of Mount Zion and all around, and [a cloud] like smoke and the light of burning fire by night, and it will be sheltered by all the glory.' The LXX presupposes a different Hebrew text: instead of *wbr' yhwh*, 'and the LORD will create' it was translated from *wb' whyh*, 'and he will come and there will be ...' or perhaps – and this would accord with the rules of the correcting scribes and keep the same number of letters in the text – *wb'h whyh*, 'she will come, and there will be a cloud ...'. A Greek verb would not distinguish a masculine and a feminine form here, and 'she will come and there will be a cloud ...' is certainly compatible with other evidence about the Lady and her cloud.

There are several theophany and Wisdom words in Isaiah 4.5 because the later writer has fused together theophany on Zion and the theophany on Sinai: a cloud, *'nn,* by day and smoke, *'šn*, and the brightness, *ngh*, of a flaming fire by night. There was smoke, *'šn*, when Abram made the covenant with [Shaddai] (Gen.15.17); there was smoke when Isaiah received his vision (Isa.6.4). There was brightness, *ngh*, when the LORD came from his temple on the cherub, wings of the Spirit (Ps.18.10-12, my translation); there was brightness around the chariot of the cherubim and the Living One, within its great cloud (Ezek.1.4), there was brightness surrounding the human figure on the throne (Ezek.1.27-28); there was brightness when the cloud filled the temple court as the chariot throne departed (Ezek.10.4); nations would

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[101] 1Q Isa[a] omits the second part of v.5, passing from 'by day' in v.5, to 'by day' in v.6, so most likely a scribal error.

come to the brightness of Zion's sunrise (Isa.60.3) – a passage that later describes her as a suckling mother. In a passage addressed to the Daughter of Zion when she is no longer forsaken – the fulfilment of the prophecy in Isaiah 6.12 – her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation like a burning torch (Isa.62.1, my translation). In all these instances, the brightness is linked to the Lady, and the prose insertion into Isaiah could well be describing the return of the Lady to shelter her city. This had been her role: the refugees protested to Jeremiah that the Queen of Heaven had protected their city (Jer.44.18); and Ben Sira would later use the imagery of Isaiah 4.5 to extol Wisdom, showing that in his time it was understood to refer to the Lady:

> Blessed is the man who meditates on Wisdom ...
> He will place his children under her shelter,
> And will camp under her boughs;
> He will be sheltered by her from the heat,
> And will dwell in the midst of her glory. (Ben Sira 14.20, 26-27)

What might be implied in the other passages where there is the cloud, brightness and smoke? It is interesting to read familiar texts with the possibility that the cloud and the glory indicated the presence of the Lady bringing the LORD, her Son. When the LORD came to Moses on Sinai, he came in a thick cloud, *'nn*. The cloud was the usual sign of theophany:[102] on the third day there was a thick[103] cloud on the mountain (Exod.19.9, 16), and Moses entered the cloud, which was described as the glory of the LORD (Exod.24.15-18). In this cloud Moses received the vision of creation.[104] The theophanic cloud was sometimes described as a pillar of cloud that led the people through the desert (e.g. Exod.13.21; 14.19); sometimes as a pillar of cloud that stood at the door of the tent of meeting when Moses was speaking with the LORD (Exod.33.9-10; Num.12.5); and sometimes just as a cloud (Exod.34.5; Num.10.34). When Ben Sira wrote of Wisdom, he said that her throne was in a pillar of cloud (Ben Sira 24.4), and when 'Solomon' told the story of the Exodus, he said that Wisdom:

> Guided them along a marvellous way,
> And became a shelter to them by day,
> And a starry flame through the night.
> She brought them over the Red Sea,
> And led them though deep waters ... (Wis.10.17, 18)

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[102] 58 times in the Hebrew Scriptures, see BDB, op.cit., n.2 above, p.778.
[103] A different word for thick, here *kbd*, which is very similar to the word for the glory of God.
[104] See below, p.265.

These two writers in the Egyptian Jewish community understood that the cloud meant the presence of the Lady, and presumably they read the rest of their Scriptures in the same way.

In priestly material, the glory of the LORD appeared in a cloud (e.g. Exod.16.10; 24.15), and the cloud of glory filled the tabernacle (Exod.40.34-38).[105] The D writer said that when the ark had been set in place in the holy of holies, the cloud of glory filled the temple and the priests had to withdraw (1 Kgs 8.10-11). The cloud was represented in the temple by incense. When Aaron entered the holy of holies, he would see the LORD in the cloud over the mercy seat (Lev.16.2), and the cloud was created by incense: 'that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat' (Lev.16.13). The incense was a special blend, and it was forbidden to use it outside the tabernacle/temple (Exod.30.34-38). Ben Sira knew that Wisdom 'was' the perfume of the incense: 'like galbanum, onycha and stacte, and like the fragrance of frankincense in the tabernacle ...' (Ben Sira 24.15b). The LORD appearing in the incense cloud over the 'mercy seat' would, for Jews in Egypt, have been the LORD enthroned on his Mother, an image that would become very familiar to Christians.

Ezekiel the priest saw the chariot throne leaving the temple. He saw first that a cloud filled the inner court of the temple, and then that this was the brightness of the glory of the LORD (Ezek.10.3-4). As the chariot throne arrived in Babylon, he saw a great cloud approaching, with brightness all around. The brightness was like a rainbow in a rain cloud, and in the midst of the bright cloud was a fiery human form (Ezek.1.4, 28). The throne moved in a cloud, as Job also knew: 'He covers the face of the throne, and spreads over it his cloud' (Job 26.9, my literal translation). Ezekiel also saw the chariot throne and its glory returning from the east to the temple, exactly as he had seen it depart (Ezek.43.1-5), and it was returning to a temple rebuilt according to the instructions and measurements revealed by an angel with a measuring rod (Ezek.40.5).[106] One of Ezekiel's fellow priests, perhaps a younger contemporary, told his version of the story of Noah and revealed more about the cloud and its rainbow as he knew it: *it was the sign of the everlasting covenant*: 'I will set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth ... I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh ...' (Gen.9.13, 15). The rainbow around the chariot throne was the sign of the older covenant of Shaddai that was superseded by the Moses covenant. John saw the rainbow round the throne (Rev.4.3), and when he saw the mighty angel coming from heaven with his little scroll [or book], he was wrapped in a cloud with a rainbow round his head (Rev.10.1). John was watching as the everlasting covenant was restored.

[105] We shall return to this in more detail, see pp.264–70 below.
[106] This detail will prove significant, see below, pp.288–9.

When Daniel recalled the imagery of the ancient temple, he described the thrones and the fiery wheels of the chariot, and the ten thousand thousands of angels, just as in Psalm 68 (Dan.7.9-10). Then he saw the human figure on clouds brought before the throne and installed as king (Dan.7.13-14). There was a cloud at the Transfiguration, but only Matthew, writing within a Hebrew Christian community, said it was a *bright* cloud (Mt.17.5; cf. Mk 9.7; Lk.9.34), and a voice from the cloud identified Jesus as 'my son'. There was a cloud at the Ascension (Acts 1.9), and the angels told the disciples that Jesus would return in the same way (cf. Rev.1.7). John saw the mighty angel coming from heaven, wrapped in a cloud and wreathed in a rainbow, with his face like the sun and his legs like pillars of fire (Rev.10.1). This was Ezekiel's fiery figure, enthroned within the great bright cloud and wreathed in a rainbow (Ezek.1.26-28). As the angel in heaven announced that the kingdom of the LORD and his anointed had been established on earth, so too in heaven, the woman clothed with the sun gave birth to her boy child.

The holy mountain had been central to the older faith in Jerusalem, and the storytellers set all the mountain-top events on this one holy mountain. The detail is lost in history, but a certain pattern can still be traced, and that pattern links the holy mountain to the holy of holies and the mystical vision from the holy of holies. Moses was almost certainly a later addition to the Sinai story. The small amount of surviving evidence shows that Moses gradually took over the role of the ancient king during the second temple era, such that about 200 BCE Ezekiel [not the prophet] could write a Greek-style play about the Exodus in which Moses dreamed about being made a king on Sinai. The writer was clearly drawing on more than just his Scriptures; he must have known the ancient customs in Jerusalem, and Sinai as the holy of holies.

Methought upon Mount Sinai's brow I saw
A mighty throne that reached to heaven's high vault
Whereon there sat a man of noblest mien
Wearing a royal crown; whose left hand held
A mighty sceptre; and his left to me
Made sign, and I stood forth before the throne.
He gave to me the sceptre and the crown,
And bade me sit upon the royal throne,
From which himself removed. Thence I looked forth
Upon the earth's wide circle, and beneath
The earth itself, and high above the heaven.
Then at my feet, behold, a thousand stars
Began to fall, and I their number told,
And they passed by me like an armed host ...[107]

[107] Ezekiel, *Exodus*, in Eusebius, *Preparation of the Gospel*, tr. E. H. Gifford, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903, Book IX.29.

Philo, too, writing almost three centuries later, knew that Moses was 'named God and king of the whole nation, and entered, we are told, into the darkness where God was (Exod.20.21), that is, into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal and archetypal essence of existing things ...'.[108]

Moses [or someone] ascending Sinai had been fused with the person who entered the holy of holies to be made king. In the holy of holies he was with the invisible archetypes of all things [a temple concept, not one original to Plato],[109] and as he looked out from the holy of holies he saw the whole creation. This is the scene in Revelation 4–5, where the Lamb is enthroned, given the little book – of which no detail is given – and then sees the whole creation, heaven and earth and under the earth and in the sea. At least, that is what John heard, and so we assume it was part of the vision as a whole. The Christians inherited the 'pre-Mosaic' version of the holy of holies vision, which was known to priestly writers responsible for Exodus 25–31. Here, Moses was told to build the tabernacle in accordance with what he had seen whilst on the mountain (Exod.25.9, 40), and the tabernacle represented the creation.[110] Thus Moses was already playing the role of the king when Exodus was compiled.

Little is known of the royal ritual in the temple, but the D writer gave a brief account of how Joash was made king by Jehoiada the priest. 'Then he brought out the king's son and put the crown upon him, and gave him the *'ēdût or 'ēdot*; and they proclaimed him king and anointed him ... And Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and between the king and between the people, that they should be the people of the LORD; and between the king and between the people' (2 Kgs 11.12, 17, translating literally). The interesting letters are *'ēdût/'ēdot* which now mean 'testimony' in the sense of the ten commandments (e.g. 'the two tables of the testimony', Exod.31.18), a word derived from the root meaning 'bear witness'. An identical word, found only in the singular in the Hebrew Scriptures, means 'testimony' or 'witness to things'. The D writer could have been describing how the king received a copy of Deuteronomy when he was crowned (Deut.17.18-20). Or this could be a vestige of the old ceremony, when the king received whatever had preceded Deuteronomy as the text/sign of the covenant. Since it was something he was given as a sign of kingship – which for the Davidic kings was also priesthood – it could have been something written on Aaron's rod which was an almond branch, one of the titles of the king was 'the Branch' (Zech 3.8; 6.12), in Jeremiah's call vision he saw the almond branch in danger,[111] and the menorah was made like an almond tree (Exod.25.31-39).

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[108] *Life of Moses* I.158.

[109] See below, pp.291–300.

[110] See L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 6 vols, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909, vol.1, p.51.

[111] See above, p.63.

Then, when the king had been anointed, crowned and given something to hold, Jehoiada the [high] priest presided at a covenant making ceremony. Here the text is convoluted. 'And Jehoiada made the covenant between the Lord and between the king and between the people, to be the Lord's people, and between the king and between the people (2 Kgs 11.17, my literal translation). Given that the various 'betweens' are just Hebrew idiom, the second covenant between the king and the people seems to be an explanation of the first, between the LORD-and-the-king and the people, implying here what is implied elsewhere: that the king *was* the LORD. The Chronicler said that when Solomon was made king, 'the people worshipped the LORD-and-the-king', and that 'he sat on the throne of the LORD *as* king' (1 Chron.29.20, 23, translating literally). This was the temple ritual that corresponded to the scene in Deuteronomy 33 – now described as the *Blessing of Moses* – when the LORD became king and the Law was given, and the Lady was also present at his right hand (Deut.33.2). If the object given to the king was the almond staff, this was a sign of the Lady at/in his right hand. It was long remembered as the sign of the Mother of the Messiah,[112] given to each of the Davidic kings until the destruction of the temple, when it was hidden away until the Messiah returned.[113] If the text of Deuteronomy 33.2 has been changed from Ashratah, *'šrt*, to 'fiery law', *'šdt*, this could formerly have been the Lady's book of Wisdom. For the Deuteronomists, the fiery law *did* replace the Lady, insofar as it was offered as a substitute for Wisdom. The D covenant ceremony centred on the ten commandments and the book of the Law, and so when Josiah stood by the pillar in the temple and made a covenant, it was to obey all the rules in the book of the covenant (2 Kgs 23.3). When Joash was made king, and stood by the pillar and made a covenant (2 Kgs 11.14), what covenant did he make? Presumably it was the covenant that preceded the Mosaic covenant in Jerusalem, and this was associated with the Lady. What Moses had established at 'Sinai' had formerly been established on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.

The Everlasting Covenant

The great changes wrought by Josiah were prompted by finding 'the book of the covenant' in the house of the LORD (2 Kgs 23.2). Scholars have concluded, for a variety of reasons, that the book of the covenant was an early form of Deuteronomy, and the theme of much Old Testament

[112] See the sixth century CE Jewish Apocalypse *The Book of Zerubbabel*. Hephzibah, the name for the restored Zion (Isa.62.4, 'my delight is in her') is to be given an almond staff, when she and her son liberate Jerusalem from enemies. English translation of the text by M. Himmelfarb in D. Stern and M. J. Mirsky, *Rabbinic Fantasies*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, pp.71–81.
[113] *Numbers Rabbah* XVIII.22.

scholarship since the late nineteenth century has been whether the concept of covenant was either first used or else radically changed at this time. The understanding of covenant is inextricably bound up with the story of biblical scholarship since that time. Once literalism had been superseded, the pieces of the Hebrew Scriptures had to be fitted into a different picture, and the straightforward pattern was questioned. No longer did the Hebrew Scriptures simply tell the story of Moses, the Sinai covenant and the ten commandments, followed by a salvation history of apostacy and repentance, and finally the destruction of Jerusalem because the kings had been unfaithful to the LORD. 'Biblical history' was no longer the unquestioned account of the chosen people, and the concept of 'covenant' was the focus of much of the debate.

The question was: which covenant? There are several forms of covenant in the Hebrew Scriptures, and one of the unacknowledged assumptions of recent scholarship has been that if any type of covenant did not fit the proposed new scholarly scheme(s), it could be explained as the literary fiction of a later age. The result was that the Moses covenant came to dominate the field, along with the Deuteronomists' view of history. The so called Deuteronomistic history (Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings) had a characteristic vocabulary and style, but also a defining theology: a negative view of the temple cult and monarchy, and the belief that the chosen people were defined as those who had been brought from Egypt and given the Law of Moses. Cultic reform was the constant theme, and Moses and Josiah were the great heroes.[114] Since the D history was usually read as the 'standard' history of Israel, it is hardly surprising the Moses covenant was also seen as the norm.

Meanwhile, New Testament scholars were puzzled by the lack of 'covenant' language in the New Testament. 'In spite of the overall title [New Testament = New Covenant], covenant ideas play a comparatively restricted role in the NT.'[115] This in turn has affected the understanding of Christian origins and theology, especially the context of the Eucharist and meaning of atonement. Thus Dillistone, in his influential book *The Christian Understanding of Atonement,* observed: 'From the New Testament there come hints, suggestions, even daring affirmations of a comprehensive cosmic reconciliation', but, influenced no doubt by current fashion in biblical study, he doubted that this derived from Hebrew thought. 'It was not until early Christian witnesses found themselves confronted by pagan systems in which a full theory of cosmic redemption played a prominent part that the effect of the work of Christ upon the cosmos at large began to receive serious

[114] First set out in M. Noth, *Űberlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, pp.1–110, (1957), ET *The Deuteronomistic History*, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991.

[115] 'Covenant' in *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. R. J. Coggins and L. H. Houlden, London: SCM, 1990, p.145.

consideration.'[116] Greek influences were detected in many places and so on, because New Testament scholars had been basing their work on the wrong premises and on the wrong covenant.

More than half the references to covenant in the New Testament occur in Hebrews, where the primary context is not Sinai but Abraham, Melchizedek and the day of atonement (Heb.7.15–9.22), none of which has any place in the D writings. Paul contrasted the promise given to Abraham and the Law given to Moses (Rom.4, *passim*, and on a different basis, Gal.3.5-8); he contrasted the letters carved in stone and the transforming presence of the Spirit (2 Cor.3.7-18); and he emphasised reconciliation and peace (e.g. Eph.2.11-22; Col.1.15-20). At the last supper, Matthew's Jesus spoke of a covenant for putting away sins (Mt.26.28, translating literally), and none of the covenants usually cited in the Hebrew Scriptures deals with putting away sins. The contexts for the New Testament covenant – Abraham, Melchizedek, atonement, the transforming presence of the Spirit, reconciliation and peace, putting away sins – all point to the everlasting covenant (also known as the covenant of peace), and the New Testament is full of this language. But nobody has even considered that this covenant was the primary covenant of both Old and New Testaments because of the pre-occupation with, and assumptions about, Moses and Sinai.

What did covenant mean? There has been much debate over the meaning of the word *b^e^rît*, and its derivation:

- from *brh* I, meaning eat, and so the reference is to eating a covenant meal.
- from *brh* II, meaning see and its derived meaning choose.
- from an Akkadian word *birtu* meaning clasp or fetter.
- from the Akkadian preposition *birit* meaning between.
- from a hypothetical root [*br*] meaning separate.[117]

All have been identified as possible etymologies – but always in the light of the Moses/Sinai norm. Barr, however, gave an important warning: 'All evidence suggests that the effective semantic function of *b^e^rît* was far removed from any sense that can be detected by etymology; indeed, it is likely that the semantic analysis of *b^e^rît* itself will be more decisive for the etymological question than the etymology can be for understanding this word.'[118] Of *b^e^rît* he noted that the word had no

[116] F. W. Dillistone, *The Christian Understanding of Atonement*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968, p.47.
[117] E. W. Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1986, pp.94–6. The word 'covenant' appears in the Lxx as *diathēkē*, which can mean a compact or treaty, but it can also mean a deposit in the sense of an oracle, and the underlying verb *tithemi* means to arrange.
[118] J. Barr, 'Some Semantic Notes on the Covenant', in *Beiträge zur Alttestamentliche Theologie*, ed. H. Donner, R. Hanhart, R. Smend, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1977, pp.23–38, p.24.

obvious – ‘transparent’ – meaning, and that it was never found in the plural in biblical Hebrew.

Sometimes when the word occurs, the context suggests something very different from Sinai and the ten commandments, and of the texts given below, only the Genesis example is ‘historically’ prior to Moses. The prophets linked covenant not to the LORD’s exclusive relationship to his people, but to *the Creator’s relationship to the creation.*

- ‘Behold I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you ... the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth’ (Gen.9.9-10, 16).
- ‘The earth mourns and withers ... for they have broken the everlasting covenant ...’ (Isa.24.5).
- ‘The covenant is broken ... the land mourns ...’ (Isa.33.8-9).
- ‘The mountains may depart ... but my covenant of peace shall not be removed ...’ (Isa.54.10).
- ‘For you will have a covenant with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you’ (Job 5.23).
- ‘If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night ... then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken ...’ (Jer.33.20-21, also 25).
- ‘I will make with them a covenant of peace ... and fertility and prosperity return to the land’ (Ezek.34.25-31).
- ‘My servant David shall be king over them ... I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them ...’ (Ezek.37.24-26).
- ‘I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air and the creeping things of the ground ...’ (Hos.2.18).
- ‘My covenant will stand firm for him ... and his throne as the days of the heavens’ (Ps.89.28-29).

These examples suggest that ‘covenant’ had a meaning connected with the order and stability of creation, and that this was linked to the role and status of the king.[119] Since there was only one such order, covenant was not used in the plural.

If it is more likely that ‘the semantic analysis of *b*^{e}*rît* itself will be more decisive for the etymological question’, then the word *b*^{e}*rît* derives from or is related to the verb *br’* meaning shape/create, a word used only of divine activity. Most examples are found in priestly writings (e.g. Gen.1.1, 21, 27;

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[119] This has been explored in R. Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1992.

2.3, 4; 5.1, 2; Exod.34.10, literally 'marvels not yet created'); in the Psalms (e.g. Pss.51.10; 89.12, 47; 104.30; 148.5); in Ezekiel (Ezek.21.30; 28.13, 15) and in the Second Isaiah (40.26, 28; 41.20; 42.5; 43.1, 15; 45.7, 8, 12, 18; 48.7; 54.16; also in Third Isaiah 65.17, 18). Covenant/create would offer wordplay on the assumed root *brh*, bind, which BDB suggests as the underlying meaning of *b^{e}rît*, covenant.[120] Such a covenant would have been created by bonds and seals, which, as we have seen, was the older story of creation.[121] This was the covenant of the Lady who held all things together in harmony (Lxx Prov.8.30). If Moses replaced Wisdom with the Law (Deut.4.5-6), then presumably her style of covenant was also replaced by the treaty-style covenant of the Law of Moses. When Paul contrasted the Law/flesh and the Spirit/life (e.g. Rom.7.6; 8.6), he was comparing these two styles of covenant.

The various forms of covenant mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, apart from the covenant of Moses at Sinai, do have similarities that distinguish them from the Moses covenant and suggest 'creation' as the meaning of covenant:

- with Noah, that the creation would never be destroyed by water again, and that the rainbow would be the sign of this everlasting covenant (Gen.9.11-17);
- with Abram, that his family would possess the land from the Nile to the Euphrates, and that circumcision would be the sign of this everlasting covenant, the new situation (Gen. 15.18-21; 17.7-10);
- with David, that one of his dynasty would always reign in Jerusalem, a permanent institution (2 Sam.7.11b-13);
- with Phineas, that he and his family would have the covenant of peace, the covenant of everlasting priesthood (or perhaps 'the priesthood of eternity', Num.25.12-13), possibly the same as the covenant of life and peace with Levi (Mal.2.5; also Deut.33.9), another permanent institution;
- and there was Jeremiah's new covenant, compared to the stability of the created order (Jer. 31.31-37).[122]

There was also a covenant with Adam, of which no more is said than: 'Like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me' (Hos.6.7; also at 8.1). Adam's sin was to reject the tree of life which was the symbol of Wisdom, and to choose instead the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. *When Adam broke the covenant, he rejected Wisdom*, and, as we have seen, Deuteronomy and the Moses covenant offered Law instead of Wisdom. Everything points to an older covenant in

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[120] BDB, op.cit., n.2 above, p.186.
[121] See above, p.206.
[122] See above, pp.68–9.

the dispensation of the Lady, a covenant manifested as the bonds and seal of creation, but the various examples of this older covenant have been either ignored by scholars or deemed expendable in the interests of formulating a theory about Moses and Sinai.

Wellhausen, writing in the nineteenth century, said that Israel's early years were characterised by a simple bond between the LORD and his people, and that only in the seventh century did Deuteronomy and the later prophets introduce the idea of a covenant that was in effect a contract to keep certain rules. This theory, in one form or another, would reappear for the next 100 years. The original narrative of the early years, he concluded, had no story of Sinai, and only later did Moses acquire the role of lawgiver.

> The giving of the law at Sinai has only a formal, not to say dramatic, significance. It is the product of the poetic necessity for such a representation of the manner in which the people was constituted Jehovah's people as should appeal, directly and graphically to the imagination ... For the sake of producing a solemn and vivid impression that is represented as having taken place in a single thrilling moment, which in reality occurred slowly and almost unobserved ... If we eliminate from the historical narrative the long Sinaitic section, which has but a loose connection with it, the wilderness of Kadish becomes the locality of the preceding and subsequent events.[123]

The term covenant was not used by the eighth century prophets to describe the relationship of the LORD and his people, and when it was first used in the time of Josiah, the word covenant, *b^{e}rit*, meant law and treaty. 'After the solemn and far-reaching act by which Josiah introduced this law, the notion of covenant-making between Jehovah and Israel, appears to have occupied the central position in religious thought ...'[124] Scholars then began to scrutinise where and how the word covenant was used: in the Pentateuch, only Yahwistic material mentioned a covenant between Israel and Yahweh at Sinai and the priestly material did not use 'covenant' to describe the lawgiving at Sinai; only in Deuteronomy and from the time of Jeremiah onwards did 'covenant' become central in *the writings* that became the Hebrew Scriptures.[125] Controversy followed: over the meaning of the word covenant and whether it was a contract between Yahweh and the people that could be dissolved; over the nature of Israel's earlier religion; over the silence of the eighth century prophets regarding the covenant; and over the Sinai narrative: was it historical or not?

Under the influence of Weber, who emphasised the social role of the Moses covenant in creating the early confederation of twelve tribes and

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[123] J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, ET Edinburgh, 1885, pp.439.
[124] Ibid., pp.418–19, cited in Nicholson, op.cit., n.117 above, p.7.
[125] The work of J. J. P. Valeron, summarised in Nicholson, op.cit., n.117 above, pp.14–15.

that the prophets assumed the teaching of the older laws, the role of the other covenants was reconsidered.[126] Scholars were then persuaded that the Davidic covenant had indeed been the foundation for the monarchy, and that the covenant with Abraham had been fundamental in the patriarchal period, although this was a time of deities other than Yahweh.[127] 'The result was that widespread agreement rapidly emerged during these years concerning the origins and significance of *all three major Old Testament covenant traditions (the Sinaitic, Abrahamic and Davidic*) where previously there had been a marked division of opinion.'[128] Note that the everlasting covenant with creation was not even considered.

By about 1930, it was generally agreed that the covenant between the LORD and his people was historical, ancient and fundamental to their identity. It was assumed that the Mosaic covenant was the norm, and that Israel's religion was based on the experience of historical events and the conviction that Israel was the chosen people. Any 'nature' religion was rejected as alien to Israel's special tradition, an assumption that was to prove disastrous to later biblical scholars who would be challenged to find a biblical basis for environment theology. W. Eichrodt, whose influential work marks the beginning of modern Old Testament theology, made covenant the focus of his scheme.

> The safest starting point for the critical examination of Israel's relationship with God is still the plain impression given by the OT itself that Moses, *taking over a concept of long standing in secular life*, based the worship of Yahweh on a covenant concept ... Any understanding of God's involvement with his people in terms of popular Nature religion was rejected. The covenant agreement excluded the idea ... that between God and his worshippers there existed a bond inherent in the order of Nature ...[129]

These ideas were influential: covenant as the Law given at Sinai, and the revelation of God in history. Thus G. E. Wright could state in 1952: 'The realism of the Bible consists in the close attention to the facts of history and of tradition, because these facts are the facts of God.' '[Israel's] special relationship to God, which was the basis of Israel's nationality, was given

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[126] M. Weber, *Das antike Judentum, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssociologie* III, ET *Ancient Judaism*, London: 1952.

[127] Exemplified by A. Alt 'The Formation of the Israelite State in Palestine' and 'The God of the Fathers' both in *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*', Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1966, pp.171– 238 and pp.1–78 respectively.

[128] Nicholson, op.cit., n.117 above, p.49, my emphases.

[129] W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols, ET London: SCM Press, 1961, vol.1, pp.37, 42, my emphases.

concrete expression more widely in the language of legal covenant than in any other.'[130]

Wright's contemporaries were beginning to explore other aspects of covenant, noting the similarity between biblical patterns and ancient treaty forms, especially those of the Hittites. Such a treaty form was known in the late Bronze Age, the time of Israel's origins, and would, like those of the Hittite kings, have bound together the various tribes to their one God and also given them a code of law.[131] Others modified this theory, in the light of additional evidence, by suggesting that the original covenant form was ancient and embedded in ritual – the sacrifice and blood sprinkling, the meal before the God of Israel (Exod.24.8, 11) – and only later was it modified when the covenant came to be understood as a suzerainty treaty. The treaty form is not found in priestly accounts of the Sinai covenant, which lacks both the historical prologue and the curses characteristic of the political model. The context of the Sinai covenant making, it was observed, was a theophany.[132]

Then scholars returned to Wellhausen's original suggestion and built upon it. R. H. Pfeiffer, for example, was confident that 'the idea of God's revelation of ethical codes cannot be traced back before 621, in the Ten Commandments and the Deuteronomic Code (Deut.12-26): in fact, that year marks the earliest acceptance anywhere in the world of a book as divinely inspired, for the Deuteronomic Code is the earliest known canonical scripture.'[133] 'Covenant' was used most in Deuteronomy and related writings, and was synonymous with law, as in 'the curses of the covenant written in the book of the law' (Deut.29.21; cf. 2 Kgs 23.2, 21). Of the 'earlier' covenants, only that with Abraham had any historical basis, it was said, and this promise of the land had to be modified if the disasters of the seventh–sixth centuries BCE were to be explained. Deuteronomy was compiled from earlier material, reworked with a new emphasis. The later D writers worked in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, and had to explain the disaster. The work of O. Perlitt was significant in this development of covenant theory, emphasising that the innovations associated with Deuteronomy were a response to the critical situation of the seventh and sixth centuries, after the northern and southern kingdoms were conquered. References to covenant in earlier texts were a sign of D revisions, and the covenant with David was a later literary fiction.[134] The covenant with Abraham had been

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[130] G. E. Wright, *God Who Acts. Biblical Theology as Recital,* London: SCM, 1952, pp.38, 52.

[131] See, for example, G. E. Mendenhall, 'Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition', The Biblical Archaeologist 17 (1954), pp.50–76.

[132] Summed up in D. J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, Analecta Biblica 21, Rome, 1963, rev. 1978.

[133] R. H. Pfeiffer, *Religion in the Old Testament*, London: A&C Black, 1961, p.55.

[134] The antiquity of the Davidic covenant was maintained by T. N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah. The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings*, Lund: Coniectanea Biblica, 1976 pp.275–6, who suggested that the word 'covenant' was not used in the Nathan oracle by the D writers because they wanted all covenants to be conditional.

an unconditional promise of the land, whereas the new situation required an explanation why the land had been lost. Thus the Moses covenant emphasised that possession of the land was conditional on keeping the Law and worshipping only Yahweh.[135] Difficult facts remained: the climax of the Sinai narrative was not covenant but theophany (Exod.24.10), when people saw the LORD; and the great covenant at Shechem (Josh.24) has the signs of a later D composition. The eighth century prophets did not use 'covenant' to describe the LORD's relationship with his people and they seem to have known very different stories from the ones in the present Hebrew Bible. Why did Amos not mention Sinai and covenant, even though he knew the story of the Exodus and subsequent wandering in the wilderness (Amos 2.9; 3.1; 9.7). Why does Hosea speak of secular covenants (Hos.10.4; 12.1); of a covenant with the natural world (Hos.2.16-20); of a covenant with Adam (Hos.6.7); and only once of a covenant that could imply knowledge of Sinai.[136] There was theory and counter theory, but none accounted for all the evidence.

The Isaiah corpus shows how 'covenant' was understood in the Jerusalem tradition. As always, there is the problem of dating the texts, but Isaiah does not show the obvious signs of unsympathetic reworking that characterise Jeremiah. The original Isaiah 'brand', even though it developed over the generations, can still be discerned. For Isaiah, breaking the everlasting covenant meant destroying the fabric of creation. 'The earth mourns and withers ... for they have broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth ...' (Isa.24.4, 5, 6). The curse, *'ālāh*, was the natural consequence of breaking the covenant; the created order simply collapsed when the sustaining bonds were broken. 'The angels of peace weep bitterly ... the covenant is broken ... the land mourns and languishes ...' (Isa.33.7, 8, 9, translating literally) implies that the angels of peace were heavenly powers who upheld the 'peace' of the everlasting covenant.[137] A mysterious servant figure (the sacral king?) would be appointed as 'the covenant of the people', *b^erît 'ām* (Isa.42.6; 49.8), a curious phrase unique to Isaiah, which, with one more consonant, becomes 'the everlasting covenant *b^erît 'ôlām*. Whether the servant was the covenant or even the everlasting covenant, this cannot possibly have meant that he was an ancient form of treaty. More likely he was the seal of the covenant bonds, as was the wise angel figure in Ezekiel's picture of Eden (Ezek.28.12). After the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, which someone in the Isaiah tradition compared to Noah's

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[135] O. Perlitt, *Bundestheologie im Alten Testament*, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, 36, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969, summarised and discussed by Nicholson, op.cit., n.117 above, pp.109–17.

[136] 'My covenant' and 'my law' in parallel (Hos.8.1), although this latter could refer to 'my law' in a different sense, see below, p.219.

[137] This was known to Philo, *Migration of Abraham* 181, see my book *Creation. A Biblical Vision for the Environment*, London: T&T Clark, 2010, pp.82–3.

flood, the covenant of peace would be restored and the city rebuilt (Isa.54.9-10); and the everlasting covenant, linked to David and freely flowing water, would be restored as the creation rejoiced (Isa.55.1-13). The later Isaiah did not specify which covenant had to be kept by those who would worship in the temple (Isa.56.4, 6), but a comment (a later insertion?) defines the covenant as 'my spirit which is upon you' (Isa.59.21). The everlasting covenant would be made with a rejected group of priests who would again enjoy their rights (Isa.61.5-9). None of this is Moses and Sinai, and yet it is consistent with the great themes in Isaiah: the temple theophany when Isaiah learned that rejecting Wisdom would bring devastation on the land; and the opening oracle, that all nations would assemble in Jerusalem to learn how to turn swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks (Isa.2.2-4), presumably the covenant of peace. This is far removed from the D theme of clearing away the nations and their utter destruction.

How, then, did the various types of covenant relate to each other? Was the Abrahamic covenant a late fiction, as some nineteenth century scholars had suggested, or did it preserve evidence for the earlier faith of the pre-Yahwistic period, as argued by Alt: 'The Yahwist's account in [Genesis 15] of a covenant made by God with Abraham contains cultic and mythological elements which give the impression of great antiquity ... In accordance with his basic theme, the Yahwist has associated it with Yahweh; but this of course does not show with which god Abraham was originally supposed to have made his covenant.'[138] Was the Davidic covenant built on the Abrahamic, that is, the unconditional gift of the land, or was there a distinct foundation covenant for the royal house, bound up with their role as sacred kings and which confirmed the eternal right of the Davidic dynasty in Jerusalem? As ever, the Sinai covenant was assumed to be the norm, and, to quote Alt again: 'It is true that the covenant with David can hardly be compared with the covenant at Sinai ... [but] in fact recent studies have correctly emphasised that for the prophets of Judah and Jerusalem, for whom the covenant with David is naturally of first importance, covenant of Sinai is much less significant.'[139] Note the assumption: the Davidic covenant must have been less important, even though the evidence suggests otherwise. The 'Myth and Ritual' school also emphasised the importance of the Davidic covenant in the royal ideology of Jerusalem, and the annual renewal of both kingship and covenant at an autumn festival.[140] But covenant scholarship might have developed very differently had anyone considered the everlasting covenant and its unmistakable links to Wisdom, to the Lady.

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[138] A. Alt, 'The God of the Fathers', reprinted in ET *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion,* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966, pp.1–77, p.65.
[139] A. Alt, 'Monarchy in the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah' in *Essays*, pp.241–59, p.257.
[140] For example, A. R. Johnson, 'The Role of the King in the Jerusalem Cultus' in *The Labyrinth*, ed. S. H. Hooke, London: SPCK, 1935, pp.71–111.

Alongside the question of the meaning of covenant and whether or not it was an ancient institution, scholars had been considering the possibility of a regular covenant renewal festival, possibly every year, or every seven years.[141] The Sinai tradition was said to be a cult legend, an idea first developed by Mowinckel, as part of his extensive study of the Psalms.[142] He suggested that covenant renewal had been a temple festival. The Sinai account in Exodus had kept the temple framework: purification, the mountain as a holy place corresponding to the temple, the priests going up and then seeing the LORD enthroned, and he concluded: 'After all this, we can affirm with certainty that the J and E accounts of the events at Sinai are nothing other than a reproduction of the historical new year festival, enthronement and covenant renewal celebrated at Jerusalem, transmitted in the language of historical myth.'[143] But the new year festival also renewed the world by reliving/ritualising the original acts of creation. The LORD was seen in splendour: 'Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth' (Ps.50.2). The remainder of this psalm describes the covenant with the faithful ones, and warns of judgement on those who forget God. The great procession to the sanctuary/holy mountain is the setting for Psalm 24 – 'Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?' – a psalm that describes the LORD as the Creator who has set the world firm over the waters, and enters his sanctuary as the king of glory.[144] The temple in Jerusalem, he suggested, had probably 'borrowed' many details from the earlier Jebusite practices.[145]

Von Rad, writing in 1938, also thought that the Sinai story was a cult legend, but said that the custom of recalling Sinai must have been older than the Jerusalem temple practice that ritualised it.[146] He suggested there had been an ancient covenant ritual prescribed by Moses, and that the Sinai story was a development of the ancient Shechemite tradition. 'Fortunately there are several pieces of evidence that establish this fact.'[147] The proposed ceremony at Shechem would also have been evidence for the covenant as an institution that established the nation rather than a theological idea. Large stones had to be set up and then covered with plaster; and the law was to be written on them 'very plainly'. Then there were to be formal blessings and

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[141] The law had to be read every seven years at the feast of Tabernacles, Deut.31.10. Ezra also read the law at Tabernacles, Neh.8.17-18.
[142] A summary of his work in S. Mowinckel, *Offersang og Sangoffer* (1951), ET *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2 vols, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962.
[143] S. Mowinckel, *Le Décalogue*, Paris: Felix Alcan, 1927, p.129, my translation.
[144] Ibid., p.127.
[145] Ibid., p.155.
[146] G. von Rad, 'The Form Critical problem of the Hexateuch', originally published in 1938, reprinted in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1958: ET *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966, pp.1–78.
[147] Ibid., p.36. Note in this, and in the passage from Mowinckel cited in n.143, the absolute certainty of these earlier scholars.

curses on Mount Gerizim and on Mount Ebal, the mountains to the south and to the north respectively of Shechem (Deut.27.1-26). Joshua set up such law stones on Mount Ebal (Josh.8.30-35), and Joshua reading the law at Shechem, making the covenant and then setting up a great stone seems to be a duplicate account of the same event (Josh.24.1-28). Von Rad then revealed his assumptions, showing why he rejected Mowinckel's theory that the Sinai story was linked to new year in Jerusalem:

> We would hold that our contention that the Sinai tradition had its cultic setting in the ancient covenantal festival at Shechem is as certain as such matters ever can be ... The Sinai tradition knows nothing of the cosmological elements, the battle against chaos or the creation of the world; neither does it know of the enthronement of Yahweh, the subjugation of the nations and so on. A fresh investigation is called for into the question of how far these cosmological elements, little concerned as they are with Israel's history of redemption, really belong to the Feast of Booths.[148]

But Sinai and Paran are equivalent names in Deuteronomy 33.2, and the LORD who comes from Paran in the Psalm of Habakkuk shows many of the characteristics that von Rad said were not linked to Sinai: he fights against cosmological elements and subdues the nations in battle (Hab.3.1-19).

Nicholson, however, concluded that the Shechem story was a 'Deuteronomistic composition of the exilic period'.[149] It certainly looks like an insertion into the text, and there is much D language. There had, however, been several other suggestions as to its origin: it might have been a proto-D composition, when the people were first exhorted to worship Yahweh alone, perhaps when the newcomers were settled in the northern kingdom after the fall of Samaria (2 Kgs 17.24-41); or perhaps when there was Assyrian influence in Judah. The key lies in the command to 'put away the gods, *'ᵉlohîm*, which your fathers served beyond the river and in Egypt, and serve the LORD' (Josh.24.14). Abraham their ancestor had come from 'beyond the river' and Moses had led the people out of Egypt. Which, then were the gods worshipped by Abraham *and by the people in Egypt*? There is no biblical account of the Israelites worshipping other gods in Egypt, but there is, as we have seen, considerable evidence that the religious practices of Abraham and his worship of Shaddai survived until the time of Josiah, and that Jewish refugees in Egypt continued to worship the Lady. If Joshua 24 had been a D composition whose intended hearers were the community of the returned exiles, the call to reject the gods of Abraham and of Egypt would refer to the contemporary Hebrew communities from which the

[148] Ibid., pp.38–9.
[149] Nicholson, op.cit., n.117 above, p.163.

D group were separating themselves. Other considerations indicate that this story, even if it was developed from an ancient tradition, was an exhortation to keep the Law and to worship Yahweh alone, rejecting the Lady and her wisdom. Thus Joshua took the great stone bearing the words of the Law 'and set it up there *under the oak* in the sanctuary of the LORD' (Josh.24.26). There are other possibilities for reading these words: *tht* can mean 'under' or 'instead of'; and *'allāh*, terebinth, is found only here in the Hebrew Scriptures. Pointed *'ēlāh*, also meaning terebinth, the word is found describing the fallen Zion – 'like a withered terebinth' – and the abandoned Lady (Isa.1.30; 6.13). The same letters can also be read *'elôah*, or *'ēlāh*, both of which could mean goddess. Given the importance of wordplay, did the story told for the returning exiles describe Joshua setting up the stone of the Law 'under the terebinth' or 'instead of the Lady'?

The Sinai texts in Exodus are still an enigma. The preparations described in Exodus 19 have a 'temple' setting: consecration and purification (v.10); a boundary that could not be crossed lest the people gaze on the LORD (vv.12, 21, 23); trumpets (vv.13, 16, 19); smoke and fire, and the LORD coming to the holy place (vv.18-20). There was also the cloud which came onto Sinai, the sign of the Lady, (vv.9, 16), and, according to later tradition, when Moses was in this cloud he saw the creation of the world and learned the law.[150] Early in the second century CE, 'Baruch' remembered that when Moses was on Sinai he was shown:

> The measures of fire, the depths of the abyss, the weight of the winds, the number of the raindrops, the suppression of wrath, the abundance of long suffering, the truth of judgement, the root of wisdom, the richness of understanding, the fountain of knowledge, the height of the air, the greatness of Paradise, the end of the periods, the beginning of the day of judgement, the number of offerings, the worlds which have not yet come, the mouth of hell, the standing place of vengeance, the place of faith, the region of hope, the picture of coming punishment, the multitude of angels which cannot be counted, the powers of the flame, the splendour of lightnings, the voice of the thunders, the order of the archangels, the treasuries of the light, the changes of the times, and the enquiries into the Law.[151]

According to the Enoch tradition, this was the knowledge revealed to Enoch after he had ascended to stand before the throne, been anointed and vested and transformed into an angel.[152] Baruch's list seems to be a summary of the knowledge revealed to Enoch by the angel in the *Third Parable*, which

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[150] See below, p.265.
[151] *2 Baruch* 59.4-11.
[152] *2 Enoch* 23–30.

concludes with the description of the great oath that sustains the creation.[153] In other words, these lists of revealed knowledge were part of the tradition of the eternal covenant, the creation covenant. 'This oath is mighty over them, and through it they are preserved and their paths are preserved and their course is not destroyed.'[154] Those who entered the cloud, the sign of the Lady who held all things together, learned the secrets of the creation covenant. Originally the recipient had been the king/high priest but later it was Moses. Ben Sira, writing in Jerusalem about 200 BCE, still knew that Wisdom's throne was in a cloud (Ben Sira 24.4), implying that those who entered the cloud stood before the throne of Wisdom.

Now the creation covenant may have originated outside Hebrew tradition. In some Ancient Near Eastern texts a 'covenant of peace' motif can be discerned in which a goddess has an important role. There were various versions, each involving the gods' attempt to destroy the human race after they had rebelled, and the subsequent divine promise to maintain peace, or to plant peace on earth.[155] Thus in the Babylonian story of the flood, when Ishtar the Queen of Heaven saw the destruction caused by the flood which she had commanded, she said: 'Alas, the days of old are turned to dust because I commanded evil; why did I command this evil in the council of the gods? ... Are they not my people, for I brought them forth. Now like the spawn of fish they float in the ocean.' When the flood had subsided, Utnapishtim, like Noah, emerged from his boat and offered sacrifice. Ishtar came and made an oath that she would never forget the days of the flood: 'I shall remember these days as I remember the jewels of my throat; these last days I shall not forget.' The necklace of Ishtar was a sign of her remembering the flood.[156] In the biblical story at this point, it was God, *'ᵉlohîm*, who established the everlasting covenant with Noah, and the equivalent sign was the rainbow: 'When the bow is in the cloud, I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth' (Gen.9.16).

Texts from Ugarit describe the war of Anat – the Canaanite counterpart of Ishtar – against mortals, Baal persuades her to

> Bury war in the earth, set strife in the dust,
> pour a libation into the midst of the earth, honey from a jar into the midst of the steppe ...
> For I have a word I would say to you, a message that I would repeat to you:

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[153] *1 Enoch* 58–69.
[154] *1 Enoch* 69.25.
[155] B. F. Batto, 'The Covenant of Peace: A Neglected Ancient Near Eastern Motif', Catholic Biblical Quarterly 49 (1987), pp.187–211.
[156] Gilgamesh Tablet XI, ET in N. K. Sandars, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960, pp.108–9.

> A word of tree and whisper of stone,
> the sighing of the heavens to the earth, of the deep to the stars,
> I understand the thunder which the heavens do not know,
> A word unknown to men, and which the multitudes of the earth do not understand.
> Come, and I shall reveal it
> In the midst of my divine mountain, Saphon,
> In the sanctuary on the mountain of my inheritance, in Paradise ...[157]

Similar words are found in Hosea. The LORD will make a covenant, so that people and animals can live in peace: 'I will break the bow, the sword and war from the land, and make you lie down in safety ... And in that day, says the LORD, I will answer the heavens and they shall answer the earth ... and I will sow her for myself in the land' (Hos.2.18, 23, translating literally). There is no context for this oracle of hope, and the question is: Who or what is the 'her' that will be sown in the land? Similar ideas are found in Ezekiel who was a priest in the first temple (Ezek.1.3), and whereas Hosea speaks simply of a covenant, Ezekiel describes a covenant *of peace*. He gives two accounts, one (Ezek.37.24-28) being a summary of the other (Ezek.34.25-31). The longer version has the LORD say:

> I will make with them a covenant of peace, and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods ... And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase ... And I will provide for them *prosperous plantations*, so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land ... (Ezek.34.25, 27, 29)

The LXX here has *phuton eirēnēs*, plant/tree of peace, rather than 'prosperous plantations' showing that the Hebrew text was read as *mt' šlm*, a plantation of peace rather than the present *mt' lšm*, prosperous plantation. Had the correcting scribes concealed the plantation of peace, and if so, why? It seems that Ezekiel's covenant of peace was described as planting peace, or sowing 'her'.

The Holiness Code (Lev.19-26) is very similar in style and content to Ezekiel, and affords a glimpse of the late first temple era. There is exactly the same link between fertility, prosperity and the planting of peace. The Holiness Code sets out laws for everyday living, but also for priests and holy things including the bread of the presence (Lev.24.5-9), and for the calendar and feasts including the day of atonement (Lev.23.26-32). The climax of the Holiness Code describes the result of keeping the statutes and

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[157] KTU 1.3 iii.15-30, translation in N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, p.78.

commandments: there would be abundant harvests, no wild beasts and no enemy invasions. 'And I will plant peace in the land' (Lev.26.6). 'Plant' is an appropriate translation here, rather than 'give' (as in AV, RSV), because the contemporary Ezekiel used *ntn*, 'give', to mean 'plant': 'Then he took the seed of the land and *planted* it in fertile soil ...' (Ezek.17.5).

Isaiah linked the desolation of the land to the loss of the Lady,[158] and it is likely that he saw the restoration of creation as her return. In his picture of the future (Isa.32.1-20), Isaiah saw a righteous ruler, a time when eyes and ears would be opened [again] – which was the gift of Wisdom – a time when right order was restored to society and the Spirit was poured out to renew the creation. He was describing the restoration of the covenant of peace, even though he did not use those words.

> Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field,
> And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness quietness and trust for ever.
> My people will abide in peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings and in quiet resting places. (Isa.32.16-18)

There is a similar passage in Zechariah, but again, the Hebrew text is difficult. 'For there shall be a sowing of peace' (Zech.8.12, RSV) or 'For the seed shall be prosperous' (AV), appears in the Lxx as *deixo eirēnē*, I will show forth/cause peace, suggesting that the original Hebrew read a different division of the letters: not *zeraʿ haššālôm*, sowing of peace, but *ʾezrᵉʿāh šālôm*, I shall sow peace.[159]

An early form of the Enoch tradition was known to Isaiah, even if he did not know the texts as we have them,[160] and the opening section of the current *1 Enoch* describes the same scene as the *Blessing of Moses* (Deut.33.1-5). In Enoch's account, the judgement on sinners was based on the creation covenant, because all nature acted in accordance with the Creator's commandments, but sinners did not.[161] After the judgement, 'there shall be bestowed upon the elect wisdom [?Wisdom] ... and their lives shall be increased in peace, and the years of their joy shall be multiplied ...'.[162] The judgement restored the conditions described elsewhere as sowing/planting peace. For the Enoch tradition, the Law given and upheld with the theophany from Sinai was the law of the covenant of peace, and not the Mosaic Law which is now associated with Sinai. The account in *1 Enoch*

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158 See above, pp.92–7.
159 As proposed in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.*
160 See my commentary on Isaiah in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. J. D. G. Dunn and J. W. Rogerson, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, pp.489–542.
161 *1 Enoch* 5.4-6.
162 *1 Enoch* 5.8a, 9b.

continues with a description of how the earth came to be corrupted and the creation destroyed. Fallen angels had taught secret knowledge and evil ways, and so the archangels were sent from heaven to imprison the fallen angels and their host. The archangels had to 'heal the earth', so that the plant of righteousness and truth could appear.[163] In other words, the archangels restored the covenant of peace. Now the account in *1 Enoch* could have been an ancient and fuller record of the same event as the *Blessing of Moses*, or a later expansion of it. Either way, this is how some people remembered the theophany from Sinai with the Lady at the right hand and the LORD becoming king, giving the law, bringing the judgement and healing the land. The mutilated verse at the end of the *Song of Moses* (Deut.32.43) also describes the LORD coming in judgement. The original found at Qumran has the LORD coming to bring judgement and to atone i.e. heal the land, as the sons of God and the angels bow before him. This became a Christian proof text for the role of Jesus (Heb.1.6), which explains why the MT has a much reduced form of the verse. These two, the *Song of Moses* and the *Blessing of Moses*, could, in their original forms, have been the context for Isaiah's prophecy of creation restored when the Lady returned.

The Enochic account of judgement on the fallen angels and their leader Azazel was associated with the day of atonement, and there have been various explanations of how this came to be, since none of this is mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures.[164] If, as Rabbi Ishmael taught, the Azazel of the day of atonement (Lev.16.8-10) was the leader of the fallen angels,[165] then the original meaning of the day of atonement would have been this restoration of the creation described in *1 Enoch* as healing the earth and planting righteousness and truth. Read in the light of the story of Phineas, this seems to be the link to the original understanding of the covenant of peace. After killing those who had broken the covenant and so exposed Israel to wrath, Phineas the high priest was 'given' the covenant of peace because he had made atonement (Num.25.12). This was the original context of the LORD coming with the Lady and the angels in the *Song of Moses* and the *Blessing of Moses*: it was the healing of the land, which is the meaning of the last line of *Song of Moses*: '[He] atones the soil of his people' (Deut.32.43d, translating literally as in the Samaritan, 4Q Deut^{q}, LXX, and Syriac texts). The Masoretic Hebrew here is different and defies translation.

Piecing the fragments together, the restoration of creation was described as atonement, which meant restoring the covenant of peace. This was a tabernacle or temple ritual to mark the new year and the healing of

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[163] *1 Enoch* 10.7, 16.

[164] For some discussion, see P. Hanson, 'Rebellion in Heaven. Azazel and Euhemeristic Heroes in 1 Enoch 6-11', and G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 'Apocalyptic and Myth in 1 Enoch 6-11', both in Journal of Biblical Literature 96 (1977), pp.195–233 and 383–405.

[165] Babylonian Talmud *Yoma* 67b records two views, that Azazel was the name of the stony place where the scapegoat was sent, or that Azazel was the name of the fallen angel.

creation,[166] the time when the LORD appeared as king to judge those who had broken the covenant and to re-affirm or to give the law. Restoring the covenant of peace was described as planting peace in the land to ensure fertility and prosperity, represented by the Lady appearing at the right hand. Hosea's enigmatic 'her' to be sown in the land (Hos.2.23) must have been the Spirit or the Lady, since 'peace', 'planting', and even 'tree' are masculine nouns.

Phineas turned back the wrath by his act of atonement (Num.25.11). The broken covenant meant releasing wrath into creation, when the protection of the covenant had been breached. Mary Douglas described the process well. Terms associating atonement with cleansing or purging, she said, have been a distraction from the original context which implied repair: 'According to the illustrative cases from Leviticus, to atone means to cover or recover, cover again, repair a hole, cure a sickness, mend a rift, make good a torn or broken covering ... [Atonement] means making good an outer layer which has rotted or been pierced ... Leviticus [elaborates] a series of torn covers as figures for the violated tabernacle.'[167] Deuteronomy presented the covenant differently. When Joshua set up the stones at Shechem, blessings were pronounced on Mount Gerizim and curses on Mount Ebal. These were simply the consequences of obedience or disobedience (Deut.27.1-26), with no hint of any cosmic dimension to breaching the covenant.

Texts, however, were reworked for political reasons. The current form of Deuteronomy does not list the blessings on Mount Gerizim, only the curses on Mount Ebal, but there is another version of Deuteronomy that does list blessings on Mount Gerizim, the holy place of the Samaritans. Some leather strips written in palaeo-Hebrew were acquired by Moses Shapira in Jerusalem in the late 1870s, and they showed a different version of Deuteronomy. It included blessings on Mount Gerizim, and a paraphrase of the ten commandments in the form 'Blessed be the man who ...'. It also included Leviticus 19.18b – 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' as the tenth commandment, thus resembling Jesus' summary of the commandments (Mk 12.29-31) and Paul's (Rom.13.8-9). These finds provoked great controversy and still do, but if they were genuine, they would be further evidence for the work of the correcting scribes, in this case removing reference to blessings on the holy mountain of the Samaritans.[168]

What might underlie the Deuteronomist's blessings and curses of the covenant? The people entered into 'the covenant of the LORD and his oath' (Deut.29.12, 14). The Chronicler had Huldah the prophet say to Josiah:

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[166] See my 'Atonement. The Rite of Healing' in Scottish Journal of Theology, 49 (1996), pp.1–20, reprinted in my book *The Great High Priest*, London: T&T Clark, 2003, pp.42–55.

[167] M. Douglas, 'Atonement in Leviticus' Jewish Studies Quarterly, 1 (1993–4), pp.109–30, pp.117, 123.

[168] The story of Moses Shapira in J. M. Allegro, *The Shapira Affair*, London: Allen, 1965.

'Thus says the LORD. "Behold I will bring evil upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the curses which are written in the book which was read before the king of Judah ... My wrath will be poured out on this place"' (2 Chron.34.24, 25). When Daniel prayed, he recalled that 'the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us because we have sinned against him' (Dan.9.11). The punishments for not serving the LORD were, as one would expect in Deuteronomy, of a strictly practical and everyday nature: food shortages, diseases, fever and mildew, boils and ulcers, enemy invasions and children taken as slaves, foreign rulers and locusts, and even the horror of cannibalism (Deut.28.15-57). These consequences of apostasy and disobedience were very different from those envisaged by Isaiah and Jeremiah, who saw the creation returned to its primeval state: the heaven and earth withering away, the earth shaken and torn asunder, the sun and moon ashamed as a curse devoured the earth (Isa.24.1-23); angels of peace weeping at what they saw (Isa.33.7); the earth waste and void, the heavens without light, mountains quaking and cities in ruins before the anger of the LORD (Jer.4.23-26). The cosmic catastrophe caused by breaking the bonds of the everlasting covenant, the covenant of Shaddai which Enoch described as the oath that bound the creation[169] were replaced by punishments on a more human scale for breaking the Law of Moses.

And what of the original Sinai and its covenant? Von Rad thought that the Sinai story was a cult legend, but older than the Jerusalem temple ritual that re-enacted the event. He suggested Shechem. There is also considerable evidence that the Moses and Exodus story was grafted into an older Sinai story that is mentioned, though not by name, in the Enochic *Apocalypse of Weeks*. Unravelling the [now] tightly woven fabric of the Pentateuch can never be more than tentative, and it is always overshadowed by the question: how long is memory? It is possible that there was another memory of a mountain-top theophany in the region now called Sinai which became the basis of the earliest Jerusalem cultus, and was later joined to the Moses saga that was originally just the story of the Exodus.

The story of Moses at Sinai, as told in Exodus, suggests he was in a place already sacred. Jethro his father-in-law was a priest, and Moses was keeping his flock near Horeb, the mountain of God (Exod.3.1). Archaeology has uncovered an ancient sanctuary there, and it may be that the Exodus version of the Sinai story does not just impose a temple structure on 'Sinai'; there had been something there when 'Moses' arrived. 'The study of the episode in the light of modern research, reveals an unexpected accuracy, and once more shows that tradition is of value in proportion to our power of reading it aright.'[170] The ancient sanctuary at Serabit in Sinai was unknown

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[169] *1 Enoch* 69.16-25.

[170] L. Eckenstein, *A History of Sinai*, London: SPCK, 1921, reprinted Elibron, 2006, p.64.

to Europeans until 1762, and was excavated by Flinders Petrie in 1905–6.[171] He found evidence for 'Semitic style worship of a goddess in Sinai'.[172] There were small altars for incense, [as opposed to the Egyptian style hand-held shovels for incense] and altars with a shallow top-bowl perhaps for cereal offering.[173] He concluded:

> We have here before us, then, a Semitic cave shrine, older than the Mosaic system or any other worship known to us in Syria or Arabia. We see in it a great goddess – probably Ishtar – worshipped alone and later on associated with a god. Her ritual was that of burnt sacrifices and incense offerings; many ablutions were required of the worshippers; sacred conical stones were dedicated in her temple; and oracular dreams were sought and memorial stones were erected where the devotees slept ... And we see how much of Mosaism was a carrying on of older ritual, how that movement was a monotheistic reformation of existing rites, and how the paganism of the Jews was but the popular retention of more than was granted in the state religion.[174]

The Lady was at Sinai before Moses arrived on the scene, and the Jews 'discovered' in western China, who had kept the pre-Josian form of the faith, set up small white conical stones.[175]

Eusebius, writing about 330 CE said that Sinai and Horeb were the same mountain 'in the territory of Moab',[176] but when Egeria wrote an account of her pilgrimage to the holy places in 381–4 CE, she said that Sinai and Horeb were two mountains, each of which had a church on the summit. Hers is the earliest description of Sinai: it was 35 miles from Paran, she said, and in the valley below, at the site of the burning bush, there were many monks living in cells and there was a church.[177] These sites were called the Bush and Horeb, but they may have been simply the names of the monastic settlements there, in the same way as Paran was the name of the first monastery in Judaea, founded by St Chariton early in the fourth century CE. It was at the site of the Bush monastic settlement that Justinian built the great monastery in the mid-sixth century, dedicated originally to Mary. This mountain, now Jebel Musa, has been 'Sinai' ever since, even though it may not have been the Sinai of earlier times. Davies, in his study of the wilderness traditions, noted that Jewish writers in the second century CE said that Paran was 36 miles from

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[171] W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Researches in Sinai*, London: J. Murray, 1906.
[172] Ibid., p.71.
[173] Ibid., p.134.
[174] Ibid., p.193.
[175] T. Torrance, *China's First Missionaries*, London: Thynne and Co, 1937, p.53, see above, pp.23–4.
[176] Eusebius, *Onomasticon*, section X.
[177] *The Pilgrimage of Etheria*, tr. M. L. McLure and C. L. Feltoe, London: SPCK, 1919, pp.1–8.

Mount Sinai, thus agreeing with Egeria as to the location of Sinai,[178] but the early Christian hermits may have known the same stories as the Jewish writers when they established their desert settlements. There are, however, two other mountains with interesting names: Jebel Ghorabi [Horeb?] and Jebel Saniya [Sinai], respectively northeast and southeast of the temple site at Serabit.

Lina Eckenstein, an assistant at Flinders Petrie's Sinai excavations in 1905–6, suggested that the original setting of the Sinai story had been the temple at Serabit al Kadim, which is some 40 miles northwest of the Jebel Musa. In the preface to her book *A History of Sinai* she wrote:

> I had long been interested in the hermit life of the peninsula, and in the growing belief that Gebel Musa was not the Mountain of the Law. The excavations at Serabit and the non-Egyptian character of the ancient hill sanctuary supplied new material for reflection. In the hours spent in sorting fragments of temple offerings and copying temple inscriptions, it occurred to me that we might be on the site that meant so much in the history of religion.[179]

The story of Moses at Sinai may preserve memories of the shrine at Serabit. Eckenstein suggested this context for the Exodus account:

> In the service of Jethro, Moses led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, to Horeb (Ex.3.1). Here he found himself on holy ground. The presence of a priest, of a mountain of God, and of a reserved tract of land, point to an ancient sanctuary, and our thoughts naturally turn to Serabit, for many centuries a High Place of Burning, a centre of moon cult and a shrine of the Semitic god Sopd. The wall of rough stones across the Wadi Umm Agraf marked the limit of the ground that was reserved to the sanctuary. This would be the backside of the desert from which Moses approached the mountain.[180]

For some two thousand years before the traditional date for Solomon's temple, there had been a shrine at Serabit to a female deity, whom the Egyptians named Hathor. The original shrine was two man-made caves with a plateau in front of them used as a place of sacrifice, and it was still known in mid-seventh century BCE.[181] Hathor came to be associated with a local divinity named Sopd, thought to be of Semitic origin, cf. Hebrew *špṭ*, judge.

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[178] G. I. Davies, *The Way of the Wilderness. A Geographical Study of the Wilderness Itineraries in the Old Testament*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp.23–4.
[179] Op.cit., n.170.
[180] Ibid., p.67.
[181] Ibid., p.83.

The temple at Serabit was surrounded by mines for copper, and above all turquoise, and the Lady there was known as the mistress of *mafkat*, i.e. turquoise.[182] She was the virgin mother goddess known by many names: Hathor, Ishtar, and at Serabit by a name inscribed in proto-Sinaitic, i.e. early Hebrew letters, which has been read as *ba-alat*.[183] She was represented at the site in her usual forms: a slender figure with a headdress of cows' horns enclosing a sun disc, or a face with cows' ears and exaggerated hair/wig. The figure is familiar, because she appears on plaques found in Canaan, but there she has been identified as Asherah. The Winchester Relief[184] depicts one 'Hathor' goddess bearing three names: Qudshu, 'Anat and Astarte, and Dever said, with some confidence, that 'most scholars' identify Hathor as Asherah.[185] If the temple at Serabit was Semitic rather than Egyptian in style, then the deity there could well have been the Lady in her most ancient *Semitic* form. From a much later period, and found on the opposite side of the desert of Paran [northeast rather than southwest], were the graffiti of two bovine/leonine figures at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, a male and a female, together with a cow suckling her calf. The inscription named them as Yahweh and Ashratah.

The temple at Serabit surrounded by mines could well account for the polemical poem included in the book of Job, which emphasises that Wisdom is not found by miners in mines. One wonders why that needed to be said.

> They open shafts in a valley away from where men live;
> They are forgotten by travellers,
> They hang afar from men, they swing to and fro.
> As for the earth, out of it comes bread;
> But underneath it is turned up as by fire.
> Its stones are the place of sapphires [or lapis lazuli]
> And it has dust of gold ...
> [Man] cuts out channels in the rocks,
> And his eye sees every precious thing ...
> But where shall Wisdom be found?
> And where is the place of understanding? ...
> It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir
> In precious onyx or sapphire [or lapis lazuli]. (Job 28.4-6, 10, 12, 16)

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182 '*Mafkat* may sometimes be a general term for turquoise, copper ore, malachite, or any blue green material.' G. Pinch, *Votive Offerings to Hathor*, Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 1993, p.49.

183 A. Gardiner, Journal of Egyptian Archaeology, vol.3, p.1.

184 See above, p.127.

185 See W. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005, p.177, but also pp.220, 228.

A memory of the Lady and the mines at Serabit is a possible explanation.

The Sinai story in Exodus also assumes the presence of metal working facilities. When Aaron made the golden calf, he had a graving tool (Exod.32.4), and he explained to Moses: 'I threw [the gold] into the fire and there came out this calf' (Exod.32.24). Moses had the furnishings for the tabernacle made there: acacia wood covered in gold for the ark and its poles and for the shewbread table,[186] a mercy seat and cherubim of pure gold, a huge lamp stand of pure gold, together with vessels, plates, dishes, bowls and flagons of gold (Exod.37.1-28). Whatever underlies this story of the original place of worship, it does assume a lot of metalworking and may have been told with the memory of what was done at the Sinai they knew.

The male deity at Serabit was the Semitic Sopd, whose name suggests that he was a judge. Now 'Judge' was an ancient title for the LORD. The psalm which Mowinckel suggested had been part of a temple covenant ceremony when the LORD appeared and gave his law described God as the Judge (Ps.50.6). So too 'God is a righteous judge' (Ps.7.11; cf. 9.4, 8; 10.18); 'Judge me, O LORD' (Ps.26.1, translating literally, so too Ps.43.1); 'A God who judges on earth' (Ps.58.11); 'in the midst of the *'elohîm* he judges' (Ps.82.1). Isaiah knew the LORD as Judge: 'He shall judge between the nations' (Isa.2.4); 'The LORD is our Judge, the LORD is our Ruler, the LORD is our King' (Isa.33.22). There are many more examples. Most frequently, the LORD is described as Judge in a theophany: 'Rise up, O Judge of the earth' (Ps.94.2, also 82.8); 'The LORD comes to judge the earth' (Ps.96.13, also 98.9).

Above all, the *Song of Moses* shows the LORD as the great Judge coming to heal the land and punish his enemies (Deut 32.43), and then, in the *Blessing of Moses*:

> The LORD came from Sinai,
> He dawned from Seir upon us;
> He shone forth from Mount Paran,
> He came with ten thousands of holy ones,
> With Ashratha at his right hand. (Deut.33.2, my translation)

The tightly woven memories of the holy mountains – Horeb, Sinai, Zion – could preserve the story of the Lady of Sinai who was venerated in Jerusalem long before the time of Josiah. She and her Firstborn Son, the LORD, were manifested in the royal cult of the city and celebrated in the ancient songs of king-making and lawgiving. When the Moses traditions finally came to prominence in the time of Josiah, after centuries of struggle to dominate the cult in Jerusalem, the story of Sinai was inserted into the Exodus itinerary, between the two blocks of Kadesh material (Exod.17–18 and Num.10–14).

[186] And for the incense altar, though this may be a later addition.

The original recipient of the Law on Sinai was all but lost in the legends that accumulated around Moses, and the Lady was written out of the text. It is no coincidence that Miriam, who represented Wisdom, rebelled against Moses during the second stay at Kadesh (Num.12.1), died and was buried there, and 'there was no water for the congregation' (Num.20.1-2).

5

Into Exile

Ezekiel's Visions

Jerusalem was attacked by the Babylonian army only 26 years after Josiah's purge. King Jehoiachin surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BCE and was taken to Babylon, together with his family, the leading people of the city, the craftsmen and the smiths. The treasure of both temple and palace was taken, and Mattaniah, renamed Zedekiah, was installed as king (2 Kgs 24.11-17). When Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, the army returned, the city was besieged and it finally fell in the summer of 586 BCE, in the month of Ab. The temple, the palace and all the great buildings of the city were burned, and the remainder of the temple furnishings – the gold, the silver and the bronze – was taken (2 Kgs 25.1-17). More people were deported. According to Jeremiah, there was a third deportation five years later, and the total number taken in the three deportations was 4,600. Whether this meant 4,600 people or 4,600 heads of household is not clear, but this was in no way the whole population of the land. The 'empty land' is a figment of popular imagination. Many remained and were a distinct group within Judaean society for centuries. Josephus knew that only those who had been in Babylon came to be called Jews.[1] The others, those whom the Third Isaiah called 'the servants' and 'the chosen ones', would be called by a different name (Isa.65.15). He did not reveal that name, and this is a warning that we should expect to find the remains of the older faith, and so of the Lady, *among those who did not call themselves Jews*.

There were also refugees at that time who fled to Egypt.[2] Those in Pathros had been devotees of the Lady, and it was neglecting her, they said, that had caused the fall of Jerusalem (Jer.44.15-19). It should be no surprise to find the Lady in texts treasured and composed by the Hebrew communities

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[1] Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.5.7.

[2] See above, pp.20–1.

of Egypt, texts such as the Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach, or the Wisdom of Solomon. They are not necessarily evidence of syncretism with the cult of Isis. The fall of Jerusalem, as described in the Book of Lamentations,[3] describes the fall and distress of the Lady. Whoever the writer(s) may have been, and whenever the poems were actually written, their setting is beyond doubt the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. In the first two poems, the city is described as the Lady: she who was a princess has become a widow, *'almānāh*, an echo of her former self, *'almāh*, Virgin (1.1); the daughter of Zion has lost her majesty (1.6); the Lord has trodden down the virgin, *b^{e}tûlāh*, daughter of Judah (1.15); the Lord has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud (2.1); the LORD decided to ruin the walls of the daughter of Zion (2.8); the LORD has demolished her without pity (2.17). And the cause of this anger? The LORD has made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions (1.5); Jerusalem has become filthy, her sanctuary invaded by enemies (1.10); her lovers have deceived her, her priests and elders have perished (1.19); her prophets have seen false and deceptive visions (2.14); and the sinful prophets and iniquitous priests have shed the blood of the righteous within the city (4.13). The daughter of Zion was *the victim, not the cause*, of what had gone wrong. But who were the lovers who deceived her, the prophets who spoke false things and iniquitous priests who brought this terrible punishment upon her?

Contemporary prophets give the context. Lamentations shows the wrath of the LORD who had turned against the the city, and the Second Isaiah has the LORD declare that he deserted the Lady in a moment of wrath and has now taken her back (Isa.54.1-17): 'If anyone stirs up strife, it is not from me' (Isa.54.15). *The Lady is the victim.* Jeremiah has the same imagery: 'I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride ...' (Jer.2.2); and then:

> What do you now gain by going to Egypt,
> to drink the waters of the Nile?
> Or what do you gain by going to Assyria,
> to drink the waters of the Euphrates? (Jer.2.18)

'You shall be put to shame by Egypt as you were put to shame by Assyria' (Jer.2.36). The land has played the harlot with many lovers (Jer.3.1) – but the lovers are named as the political powers of the time, not alien gods.

She had been betrayed by the prophets and priests, as Jeremiah made clear. He was called to resist these people and to speak 'against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land' (Jer.1.18). *He condemned a new teaching*, presumably one promulgated by those same kings, princes and priests. The people going astray, he said,

[3] See above, p.59.

was as unnatural as the sea passing the limit which the Creator had set for it. This was all the work of wicked men and false teachers.[4] The Wisdom manifested in the order of creation had been abandoned by teachers of falsehood. Jeremiah condemned the prophets and priests of his time and said their actions would bring disaster on the city. The scribes had falsified the law and proclaimed a new 'wisdom'. 'For from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has gone forth into all the land.' These were people who had not stood in the heavenly council and so had not heard the word of the LORD (Jer.23.15, 22). Instead, they had given false comfort that the city would be safe (Jer.23.16-17), and so Jeremiah saw the daughter of Zion in pain before those attempting to kill her (Jer.4.31).

The only revolution in religious teaching that could have prompted Jeremiah's words was Josiah's purge, and, even though the Jeremiah material has been heavily edited and annotated in the course of transmission, it has proved possible to reconstruct something of the prophet's original teaching.[5] Those who preserved the Enoch traditions remembered that the LORD abandoned his temple because of the 'reforms'; the refugees in Egypt believed that their city had fallen because they had abandoned the Lady; and the prophets knew that the Lady had been punished because of what others did to her. An eyewitness to all this turmoil was Ezekiel, a priest (Ezek.1.2-3), who was taken into exile, presumably in 597 BCE, when the ruling class was deported.

Ezekiel's family were first temple priests, and so he is perhaps the most important witness to the aftermath of Josiah's purges, how they affected the temple and the city of Jerusalem, and their impact on society as a whole. The Targum to Ezekiel understood the 'thirtieth year' which dates the book (Ezek.1.1) as the thirtieth year after Josiah's purges. Further, he was described as Ezekiel *the* priest (Ezek.1.3), which could imply he was of high priestly status.[6] If so, this would explain his detailed knowledge of the throne in the holy of holies, since access to both the place and its esoteric teaching was the privilege of the high priests (Num.18.7). There are several places where Ezekiel seems to describe the Lady leaving the temple, and in every case the text is not easy to read and the imagery is startling. This is a reminder of how little we really know about the world of the first temple and its priesthood. Distortions due to imposed translations have made the investigation of Ezekiel even more difficult. Nevertheless, if he was of a priestly family – he would have been too young to serve in the first temple – what is attributed to him will be an eyewitness account of the destruction of the temple, not in the sense of describing what physical features were

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4 See above, p.61.

5 See above, pp.55–70.

6 *The* priest 'is frequently used to designate the priest who was at the head of priestly affairs', BDB, op.cit., ch.4 n.2 (1962), p.464.

destroyed and looted, but in the sense of how the meaning or the essence of the temple was destroyed. *What he described in his visions was the Lady and her entourage leaving the temple.*

There are two visions of the chariot throne with considerable detail, and other references with no detail: chapters 1–3 describe in detail how the prophet saw the throne by the River Chebar in Babylon; and chapters 8–11 describe in detail how it left the temple. He saw it in the temple courtyard (8.4) and then, much later, returning from the east (43.1-4). What Ezekiel saw is not clear; the Hebrew is at times opaque, but more than a thousand years later, the Syrian Christian Jacob of Serug (died 521 CE) could compose a homily 'On that Chariot that Ezekiel the prophet saw' and say that the chariot throne was an image of the Virgin Mother.[7] The almost-contemporary Byzantine Akathist Hymn also describes Mary as the chariot-throne: 'Thou art the throne of the King ... O Lady, fiery chariot of the Word ... all-holy chariot of Him Who sitteth upon the cherubim ...'[8] In the early Church, it seems that the chariot throne was a well known image of the Lady, but this is an unlikely choice unless it had been drawn from the first temple traditions that became Christianity.

At about the same time, Hebrew mystical writings now known as *3 Enoch* were being collected, probably in the Babylonian community and so not far from Jacob of Serug.[9] This and similar collections are known as *merkāvāh* texts, *merkāvāh* being the Hebrew name for the chariot throne. They are evidence for how the ancient throne visions were understood within Jewish tradition. The collections include some pre-Christian material, and their content must be borne in mind when considering the text of Ezekiel, as must the question: did his cultural heirs completely misunderstand him and misrepresent the meaning of his experiences? We shall return to this in detail later.[10] Suffice it here to note: the throne was remembered *as a heavenly being* distinct from the Holy One, and was, or was the bearer of, the Shekinah beneath the tree of life in the garden of Eden. The visions of Ezekiel can also be read as the description of a female divine being leaving the temple. The Targum understood that Ezekiel saw a vision of the glory of the *Shekinah* of the LORD,[11] and Shekinah is a feminine noun. This may not be significant, but on the other hand, it may.[12]

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[7] Translation of 590.6-7 by A. Golitsin, 'The Image and Glory of God in Jacob of Serug's Homily "On that Chariot that Ezekiel the prophet saw"', St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 47 (2003), pp.323–64.

[8] See volume 2.

[9] P. S. Alexander, in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, 2 vols, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983, 1985, vol.1, pp.225–9 summarises the complex arguments and reaches this conclusion.

[10] See below, pp.291–2.

[11] Targum Ezekiel 1.2.

[12] See volume 2.

According to *3 Enoch*, the Shekinah was enthroned on a cherub beneath the tree of life in the garden of Eden, whilst the Holy One walked about in the garden. After the idolatry of Enosh and his generation, however, the Holy One had taken the Shekinah away – up into heaven – where the Shekinah rested on the backs of the cherubim and the holy creatures.[13] Sch fer argued that the earliest of the *merkāvāh* collections was not *3 Enoch* but the *Hekhalot Rabbati*,[14] where the throne is personified, and the worshippers address it/her as well as the Holy One: 'You will reign for ever, your throne will reign from generation to generation.'[15] The throne has direct access to God and can speak to him; and the throne bows three times each day before the LORD.[16] The roaring sound of the waters which accompany the throne is the hymn of praise to the King.[17] It/she is described as the precious vessel which bears the king: 'Rejoice, rejoice, throne of glory, give a ringing cry, dwelling of the Most High, shout aloud precious vessel ... make glad the king who sits upon you.' Elsewhere it is the *ḥayyôt*, the 'creatures', who are the precious vessel: '*ḥayyôt, ḥayyôt* who carry the throne of my glory ... a precious vessel that I have established and completed ...'.[18] In rabbinic literature, the precious vessel by which the world was created was the Law,[19] and yet in the Hebrew Scriptures, it was Wisdom or the Spirit. At the beginning, the Spirit fluttered over the primeval waters (Gen.1.2), which the Targum remembered as Wisdom;[20] in Proverbs, Wisdom was with the Creator as he established the visible creation (Prov.8.22-31); and the psalmist knew that the LORD had created all his works 'with Wisdom' (Ps.104.24, my translation). This is yet another example of the Law taking over the ancient roles of Wisdom.

The 'order' of Ezekiel's visions is the order they appear in the book: he saw the throne chariot approaching the River Chebar in chapter 1, on the fifth day of the fourth month in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's exile, in 592 BCE, (Ezek.1.1-2; 2 Kgs 24.12), but he did not see it leave the temple until the end of chapter 11, a vision that begins on the fifth day of the sixth month in the sixth year, 591 BCE (Ezek.8.1). The sequence seems to be: Ezekiel saw the glory by the River Chebar in Babylon (1.1-28) and was called as a prophet to speak to the rebellious people of Israel (2.1–3.15). He was later taken on a spirit-journey to Jerusalem where he saw the glory of the

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[13] *3 Enoch* 5 and 22.

[14] Meaning 'The Great Palaces'. P. Sch fer, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992, p.8.

[15] *Hekhalot Rabbati* # 257. There are several parallel texts for all these passages, with minor variants between them.

[16] Ibid., # 99.

[17] Ibid., # 162.

[18] Ibid., # 94, 173.

[19] Thus Mishnah *Aboth* 3.15. This is another example of transferring Wisdom images to the Law.

[20] Targum *Neofiti*, Genesis 1.1.

God of Israel in the temple (8.1-4). He then saw the abominations in the temple (8.5-18) and heard a voice summoning six men to destroy the city and another man clothed in linen to mark the faithful (9.1-2). In temple-vision tradition, a man, and especially a man in linen, meant an angel, but also a priest, since the priests were thought to be angels. Malachi would later describe a priest as an angel/messenger – the same Hebrew word – of the LORD of Hosts (Mal.2.7).[21] This is a vision about the temple priests, and their role in the destruction of the city.

Ezekiel saw the glory move to the threshold of the temple, and then the man in linen put the LORD's mark on the foreheads of all the faithful (9.3-11). He then went into the whirling under the cherubim and was given some of the burning coals to scatter on the city (10.1-8). The text, which is dislocated in places, does not say if or when the coals were scattered, but moves on to a description of the cherubim who were the living creature (10.9-17), *feminine singular*, not plural as in most translations.[22] The cherubim then rose up to the eastern gate of the temple, and the Spirit took Ezekiel with them (10.18–11.1a). There he saw the wicked men who had led the city astray and caused bloodshed (11.1b-12). Then the cherubim and the glory left the city and went to the Mount of Olives to the east (11.22-23). Finally, in a vision on the tenth day of the first month of the twenty-fifth year, 572 BCE (Ezek.40.1), the day of atonement in the pre-Josianic calendar, Ezekiel saw the glory return to the temple from the east, 'and the vision which I saw was like the vision which I had seen when *I came* to destroy the city' (Ezek.43.3, translating literally).

'I came' is not a scribal error, as modern translators assume; it is vital evidence for Ezekiel's identity. *He had been brought to Jerusalem on a spirit-journey and he had been the man in linen who scattered the coals on the city.* He entered the whirling under the chariot, and then he was taken up by the Spirit and carried away again. The LXX here implies a different Hebrew text from the MT: for the Hebrew 'I came' it has *eiseporeuomēn*,'I entered' – very similar to the Hebrew – but follows with 'to anoint the city', where the Hebrew now has 'to destroy'. The two words are similar in Hebrew: *lšḥt*, to destroy, and *lmšḥ*, to anoint, and given the events described in chapters 8–10, either 'destroy' or 'anoint' could have been the original. What is significant is that both Hebrew and Greek agree that *it was Ezekiel who came on a spirit-journey to perform the actions that the vision attributes to the angel figure in white linen*: he marked the faithful with a cross on their foreheads,[23] which must have been an anointing of some sort (9.4) and he was told to take burning coals and scatter them on the city (10.2). This accounts for

[21] Messenger and angel are the same word in Hebrew.

[22] But G. A. Cooke, *The Book of Ezekiel*, International Critical Commentary, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936, explains the singular form as a collective noun, p.18.

[23] The Hebrew says he marked them with the letter *tau*, which at that time was written as X.

the 'destroy' of the Hebrew text and the 'anoint' of the LXX. The original Hebrew may have had both verbs, 'to anoint and to destroy' – wordplay – but since they look so similar, one could have been lost due to haplography.

Other prophets were taken up into their visions and became a part of them. Isaiah received the burning coal on his mouth (Isa.6.6-7); 'Ezra' questioned the archangel Uriel (2 Esdr.4.1); John spoke to the elders in his vision (Rev.7.13-14). Jesus must have seen himself and his calling in the vision of the resurrected Lamb enthroned (Rev.5.1-14), the vision which he saw during his time in the wilderness, although the text is rarely read this way: 'He was with the wild beasts, i.e. the creatures of the throne, and the angels served him' (Mk 1.13).[24] This is exactly what John recorded in Revelation 5, and the title of the Book of Revelation shows that it was compiled by John from the visions of Jesus himself: 'The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him [Jesus] to show to his servants what must soon take place ...' (Rev.1.1).

Ezekiel was taken by a fiery figure on a spirit-journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, and there he saw and took part in the destruction of Jerusalem. On his later spirit-journey the hand of the LORD was upon Ezekiel and brought him, *on the day of atonement*, to see a vision of the temple correctly restored (Ezek.40.1-4). These are like the spirit-journeys described elsewhere: Isaiah, although the detail is missing, saw the LORD enthroned and then he saw his glory, his angel presence, filling the creation (Isa.6.1-3); Enoch, when he looked down on heaven and earth, also saw the angel forces at work in the creation.[25]

Ezekiel described the experience of his first spirit-journey thus: 'The hand of the Lord Yahweh fell upon me, and I saw, and behold, a form as the appearance of fire,[26] and from the appearance, from his loins and below, fire. And from his loins and above, like the appearance of brightness and the shining of the *ḥašmal*'[27] (Ezek.8.2, translating literally). In his vision by the River Chebar, Ezekiel had seen the same fiery figure seated on the throne – *ḥašmal* above his loins, fire below (Ezek.1.26-28). The fiery figure stretched out the shape of a hand, and a Spirit lifted him up by his hair between earth and heaven and brought him in visions of God to Jerusalem. Enoch had a similar experience: '... the winds in the vision caused me to fly and lifted me upward and bore me into heaven ...'.[28] The fiery hand must have been the hand of the LORD that fell upon him, but Ezekiel said

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[24] Mark is written in Greek, where the word for wild animals is *theria*, and the word for the throne creatures is *zōa*, but in the Hebrew that Jesus would have used to recount his experiences, the word for both is *ḥayyoth*.
[25] *1 Enoch* 17–19; 20–26.
[26] Or 'a man'. The Hebrew has *'š*, fire, but the LXX has *anēr*, man, and so must have read *'yš*, man.
[27] An otherwise unknown word, see below, p.252.
[28] *1 Enoch* 14.8.

it was the Spirit that carried him to Jerusalem ‘in visions of *’elohîm*’. This could mean visions of angels, angelic visions. He had a similar experience returning to Jerusalem ‘in visions of *’elohîm*’ to be shown the plan for the new temple (Ezek.40.1-2).

In the vision of destruction, Ezekiel saw the angels at work in contemporary history, and he saw himself as the angel/man in linen, the principal agent of the destruction. The word used for linen, *baddîm*, (Ezek.9.3; 10.2, 6) implies that these were the high priestly linen garments, also worn by angels (Dan.10.5; 12.6-7). Among humans, they were worn by Samuel (1 Sam.2.18), by king David (2 Sam.6.14), and by the high priests (Exod.28.42; 39.28; Lev.6.10; 16.4, 23, 32). This particular type of linen was woven in the temple by women devotees of the Lady (2 Kgs 23.7), and it seems they were driven out by Josiah.[29] The Lxx describes the man in linen as wearing the *podērēs* (Ezek.9.3), the long linen robe that the high priests wore (Exod.28.4), and that Jesus wore in John’s vision of the man in the midst of the lamps (Rev.1.13).[30]

As a priest, Ezekiel had the dual role of angel and earthly priest, but as a high priest, he would have been the presence of the Lord himself, coming to destroy the city and save the faithful. The man in linen performed the (high) priestly role of marking with a cross: ‘Put a *tau* upon their foreheads’ (Ezek.9.4, translating literally), and in the time of Ezekiel, the letter *tau* was written as a diagonal cross. It was the sign of the Lord, and later was the sign by which the high priests were marked with the anointing oil.[31] Like the high priest he stood before the throne, as the man in linen taking coals from beneath the cherubim.[32] On the second spirit-journey on the day of atonement, Ezekiel saw literally fulfilled what the high priest had enacted every year on the day of atonement, namely the renewal and restoration of the temple when it had been cleansed from sin.

Ezekiel was taken into his visions of *’elohîm*. In his first experience by the River Chebar, he said that the Spirit of the living creature (*feminine singular*) was in the wheels, such that when she rose up, they rose too (Ezek.1.20, 21). At the end of his vision, when he had heard the voice speaking to him and had eaten the scroll, Ezekiel felt the Spirit lifting him up; and as the glory of the Lord rose from its place: ‘I heard behind me the sound of a great earthquake; it was the sound of the wings of the living creatures as they kissed each other [translating literally] and the sound of the wheels that corresponded to them, the sound of a great earthquake’ (Ezek.3.12-13, my translation). Then the Spirit lifted him up too and took him back to the

[29] The text has received the attention of the correcting scribes, see p.43.

[30] The man’s linen garment was also translated *stolē*, another word used for the long garment (Ezek.10.2, 6) and also the ‘white robes’ of the faithful in heaven (Rev.7.9, 14).

[31] Babylonian Talmud *Horayoth* 12a.

[32] We shall return to this.

place where the exiles were living. He was travelling with, or perhaps in, the glory. The same is implied by his experience in the temple court. As the glory began to leave, the cherubim and wheels stood at the east gate of the temple 'and the glory of the God of Israel was over them' (Ezek.10.19). At the same time, the Spirit lifted Ezekiel up and took him to the same place, the east gate of the temple (Ezek.11.1). The cherubim and the glory then moved to the Mount of Olives, to the east of the city, and the Spirit also took Ezekiel to the east and brought him back to the exiles in Babylon (Ezek.11.22-25). In these fragmented accounts, we glimpse a possible context for two later texts, one Jewish and one Christian: the Qumran text in which an unknown voice claims: 'I am reckoned with the 'gods', *'ēlîm*, and my dwelling place is in the congregation of holiness ... I am reckoned with the 'gods' and my glory is with the sons of the King ...';[33] and the early Christian hymn:

> [The Spirit] brought me forth before the Lord's face.
> And although I was a man,
> I was named the Light, the Son of God ...
> For according to the greatness of the Most High, so She made me;
> And according to his newness, He renewed me.
> And he anointed me with his perfection;
> And I became one of those who are near Him.[34]

Since the work of the correcting scribes is apparent throughout these texts, and they are not easy to read, it is not clear what Ezekiel was describing. In addition, most rabbis forbade public reading of 'the chapter of the chariot',[35] and it could not be explained to a student 'unless he is wise and understands of his own knowledge'.[36] Those such as Rabbi Nehuniah, who taught about the throne and its mysteries, used to sit with their disciples in the temple courts.[37] This cannot have been literally true, since R. Nehuniah was teaching after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, but it shows how the origin of the *merkāvāh* material was remembered. Temple teaching was passed on literally in the temple, and Luke records that Jesus met with such temple teachers when he was 12 years old, and impressed them by his knowledge (Lk.2.46-48). Presumably he was one who 'understood of his own knowledge', and Christian oral tradition – not the gospel texts for public reading – associated Jesus' baptism and wilderness experiences with the chariot throne vision and the Lady, as we shall see.[38]

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[33] 4Q491, fr.11.
[34] *Odes of Solomon* 36.3, 5, 6. Tr. J. H. Charlesworth *The Odes of Solomon*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1973, p.127, using the alternative translations he proposed.
[35] Mishnah *Megillah* 4.10.
[36] Mishnah *Hagigah* 2.1.
[37] *Hekhalot Rabbati* # 202-203.
[38] See volume 2.

In the temple Ezekiel saw 'the glory of the God of Israel' at the northern entrance to the inner courtyard. 'It was like the vision I saw on the plain', that is, by the River Chebar (Ezek.8.4). Ezekiel did not at this point describe the glory, but the text suggests that the glory was with 'the seat [or site] of the image of jealousy that provokes to jealousy' (Ezek.8.3-4). Here there is an obvious corruption of the text: *sml hqn'h*, 'the image of jealousy' was originally *sml hqnh*, the image of the woman who creates, which in Ugarit had been a title for Athirat.[39] The correcting scribes have inserted one [silent] letter, an *aleph*, and thus changed the meaning, whereas Ezekiel was using the Hebrew equivalent of the title known at Ugarit. The Lxx describes it as 'the monument of the one who acquires, *stēlē tou ktōmenou*, 'acquire' being the other possible meaning of the Hebrew *qnh*, beget, the word in the Lady's title. This shows that the Hebrew underlying the Lxx did not have 'the image of jealousy' but 'the image of the woman who creates'. In other words, Ezekiel originally described the Lady in the temple together with the glory of the God of Israel, just as he had seen it by the River Chebar. His other descriptions of the glory imply that they too were visions of the Lady.

There follows a list of abominations that Ezekiel saw in his vision, perhaps memories of what he had actually seen in the temple, but these are a problem. His contemporary Jeremiah, who was very critical of the temple, does not mention any of them, and so one wonders what it was that Ezekiel described or again, if 'abomination' is a later opinion of what was happening. The last of the abominations, for example, the greatest of them (Ezek.8.15), was a vision of 25 men holding branches, who were facing east to worship the sun and so likely to be offering a sunrise prayer, especially as the Lady was represented by the sun. This was remembered for centuries in the prayer at Tabernacles: 'Our fathers when they were in this place turned with their backs towards the temple of the LORD and their faces towards the east, and they worshipped the sun towards the east; but as for us, our eyes are turned towards the LORD.'[40] The direction of worship was a defining characteristic that distinguished the worship of 'the fathers' from that of the second temple. Conservative groups at the end of the second temple period, however – Therapeuts, Christians, Essenes – still practised this older temple custom. For the Therapeuts, it was a sunrise prayer for wisdom;[41] for the Christians, it was one of their unwritten customs, handed down from the apostles;[42] and for the Essenes, it was preserving the ways of their forefathers.[43] Many people in the time of Jesus did not remember this practice as an abomination.

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[39] I first suggested this in my book *The Great Angel*, London: SPCK, 1992, p.54. Others have suggested it since.

[40] Mishnah *Sukkah* 5.4.

[41] Philo, *On the Contemplative Life* 89. Note that it was a prayer for *Wisdom*.

[42] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 66.

[43] Josephus, *War* 2.128.

John had a similar vision when he saw a vast multitude holding palm branches at sunrise as they waited for the high priestly angel to appear at the judgement. As in Ezekiel's vision, John then watched an angel mark the servants of God on their foreheads to protect them from the imminent wrath (Rev.7.2-3; cf. Ezek.9.3-4). This was how the early Church pictured the day of the LORD. The detail of their expectations was shaped by a prophecy of Malachi: Elijah would appear first (Mal.4.5) and then the Lady would return, the Sun of righteousness with healing in *her* wings (Mal.4.2, an accurate translation). Presumably her coming would be a sunrise. In the time of the first Christians, the prophecy was being fulfilled: Jesus said that John the Baptist had been his Elijah: 'I tell you that Elijah has come' (Mk 9.13); and John saw the Lady appear [again] in the temple, clothed with the sun (Rev.12.1). Facing east and praying for the sunrise had a particular meaning for the first Christians, and maybe also for the people of the first temple whose customs the Church retained and adopted.[44]

The correcting scribes have been at work in this section of Ezekiel too. The men who turned towards the sun held 'a branch to their nose' (Ezek.8.17), but this was changed to 'a branch to my nose/face'.[45] One wonders why this particular text needed their attention, but it is further evidence that this part of Ezekiel has been changed. The work of the scribes/editors may also explain why certain aspects of the temple that became part of early Christianity were described as abominations. The Lady and facing east are two examples. This is not to suggest that the scribes did their work after the advent of Christianity, but rather that the Church preserved those elements from the first temple that the scribes of the second temple tried to erase from the record, *aspects that concerned the Lady*.

There may be a similar explanation for the other abominations that Ezekiel saw in the temple, such that we do not now know what was actually happening: Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan[46] was praying in a room decorated with 'creeping things and loathsome beasts' (Ezek.8.10). The Hebrew text describing the decorated room is difficult. The LXX has the room 'with vain abominations and all the idols of the house of Israel drawn round about, each man in his secret chamber'. This suggests that the translator used a Hebrew text without 'creeping things and beasts', but had only 'all the loathsome things and all the idols of the house of Israel'. Each man was in the room(s) of his carved figure (reading vv.10 and 12 literally). Now there were carved figures on the wall in Solomon's temple: 'cherubim, palm trees, open flowers ... carved work' (1 Kgs 6.35), and Ezekiel described carved figures on the walls of the future temple whose plan had been revealed to him by an angel: 'On all the walls round about in the inner room and the

[44] See my book *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, London: T&T Clark, 2007.
[45] Thus the apparatus criticus of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, ad loc.
[46] Shaphan was a key figure in Josiah's temple changes, 2 Kgs 22.8-10.

nave were *carved* likenesses of cherubim and palm trees, a palm tree between cherub and cherub. Every cherub had two faces ... they were carved on the whole temple round about ...' (Ezek.41.17-19).[47] The Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* also described carved figures on the walls of the heavenly temple, but they were alive and praised the LORD on his throne: 'The figures of the *'elohîm* praise him ... figures of the *'elohîm*, engraved all around their glorious bricks ...'[48] 'At their marvellous stations are spirits, many-coloured like the work of a weaver, splendid engraved figures ...'[49] These were the living stones of the heavenly temple. In other words, a temple feature that was described by Ezekiel as part of the ideal temple and was celebrated by the writer of the Qumran hymns, was condemned elsewhere in Ezekiel as an abomination, or perhaps it was condemned by his editor.

There were also women weeping for Tammuz (Ezek.8.14). Now there was a temple prophecy of mourning, although its context is not known. The oracles at the end of Zechariah include: 'When they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him as one weeps over a first born' (Zech.12.10);[50] and in the prologue to the Book of Revelation, the prophecy was to be fulfilled with the return of the LORD with clouds – an image from the day of atonement.[51] Not all the heirs of the religion of Jerusalem would have regarded the Lady, the carved figures on the temple walls, the mourning ritual and the sunrise prayers as abominations, but the scribes who shaped the present form of Ezekiel did.

As a result of these abominations, the LORD sent judgement on Jerusalem, but the reason given in the passage that describes the judgement is not corrupt temple practices, but rather bloodshed in the land and injustice in the city (Ezek.9.9, with detail in 11.1-13). One wonders if this was the original reason, and if the list of corruptions in the temple (8.5-18) was a later insertion, as it does detach easily from its present context. Without it, the fiery man brings Ezekiel to Jerusalem where he sees the glory preparing to leave the temple, and then the fiery man summons the destroying angels and tells them to purge the city. The sinners believed that the LORD had forsaken the land and so did not see their deeds (Ezek.9.9).

What historical reality did the destroying angels represent, since Ezekiel the priest was seeing contemporary events in terms of their heavenly

[47] The Hebrew does not have the word 'carved'; it says, literally 'measures'. The Greek says they were engraved.
[48] 4Q405 19.
[49] 4Q405 23.
[50] But see below also, p.358.
[51] Part of the picture drawn by Peter in Acts 3.18-21, when the departure of the LORD and his expected return is described in terms of the high priest entering the holy of holies/heaven, and then returning. See my book, op.cit., n.44, London: T&T Clark, 2007, pp.178–80.

counterparts? He received the vision in 591 BCE, the sixth year of the exile and the sixth year of the reign of Zedekiah, about the time when Jeremiah warned Zedekiah that the city would fall to the Babylonians, and Zedekiah said he feared the Jews who had deserted to the Babylonians (Jer.38.17-19). Later tradition, as we have seen,[52] remembered these deserters as the many young priests ousted by Josiah and his agents who had joined the Babylonian army, presumably in the hope of recovering their position. *They would have been priests of the Lady*. Jeremiah spoke enigmatically of *šmry śdy*, 'keepers of the field' who would join the armies from a distant land and besiege Jerusalem (Jer.4.17), but these letters could also be read, in an unpointed text, as 'the guardians of Shaddai'. Elsewhere there are similar words, apparently spoken by the LORD:

> I have forsaken my house,
> I have abandoned my heritage;
> I have given the beloved of my soul
> Into the hands of her enemies ...
> She has lifted up her voice against me;
> Therefore I hate her ...
> Go assemble all the *wild beasts*;
> Bring them to devour.
> Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard,
> They have trampled down my portion,
> They have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness ...
> Upon all the bare heights in the desert
> *Destroyers* have come ... (Jer.12.7-12)

'Wild beasts', *ḥayyat haśśādeh*, could be read in an unpointed text as 'the living creatures of Shaddai', and 'destroyers', *šodᵉdîm*, could be a name derived from Shaddai, especially as the enemy are described as 'shepherds' that is, the shepherd angels who also appear in *1 Enoch*. Jeremiah was warning the city of Shaddai's revenge. In Ezekiel's vision, the six 'men' with weapons of destruction and the man in linen were the sevenfold heavenly presence of the high priest, the guardians of Shaddai, returning to destroy the wicked city. They appeared also in the Book of Revelation, the seven angels in bright linen with golden girdles, the distinctive dress of a high priest, who poured out destruction on Jerusalem (Rev.15.5-8). In Ezekiel's vision they depict his own role: to warn and mark the faithful and to destroy the wicked city.

The identity of the man in linen has been obscured by the correcting scribes. He carried a writing case at his side (Ezek.9.2, literally 'the inkhorn of a scribe'). Now 'inkhorn', spelled in this way, is a word not found

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[52] See above, p.14.

elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures. Here is it written *qst*, assumed to be a variant spelling of *qśt*, which would make the meaning 'inkhorn' possible.[53] The LXX read this as *qšt*, rainbow. Now *qśt* and *qšt* cannot be distinguished in an unpointed text, and so the curious spelling *qst* would ensure that the word was pronounced as 'inkhorn' rather than rainbow. The LXX also read 'scribe', *sopēr*, as 'sapphire', *sappîr*, and so the current Hebrew text 'the inkhorn of the scribe' was read as 'a rainbow of sapphire'. Which was the original? It seems that the angel girded with a rainbow of sapphire became the angel with an inkhorn though the work of the correcting scribes. The LXX also says the man/angel wore a long robe, *poderes*, always the dress of a high priest. Now the one whom Ezekiel and John saw enthroned in the glory (Ezek.1.28; Rev.4.3) was also surrounded by a rainbow, and so the man in linen in Ezekiel's vision was no ordinary angel-scribe. He was the LORD himself acting through the high priest to mark his own, just as the psalmist described: 'The LORD will write, recording the peoples ...' (Ps.87.6, my translation). They were protected. These were the faithful priests who had resisted the changes, whom the LORD called 'the sons of Zadok who kept the [true] ways of my sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from me ...' (Ezek.44.15, my translation). Jeremiah was one of them, and the Babylonians allowed him to go free (Jer.40.1-6).

The six angels carried out the LORD's command to destroy all those who did not bear his mark, and the glory moved to the threshold of the temple. Then Ezekiel began to describe the glory: there was a sapphire throne above the cherubim [pl.] (Ezek.10.1), just like the sapphire pavement in the theophany of the lawgiving at Sinai, when Moses and Aaron, two high priests and seventy elders all went up the mountain, and where, as we have suggested, Moses and Aaron were late arrivals in the story: 'They saw the God of Israel, and under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness' (Exod.24.10). The memory of the original theophany and lawgiving, before it was incorporated into the Moses saga, was preserved in the *Blessing of Moses*, and it is possible that Ezekiel saw what this described, except that he saw the glory leaving the temple and the *Blessing* describes its coming:

The LORD came from Sinai,
and dawned from Seir upon us;
he shone forth from Mount Paran,
he came with ten thousands of holy ones
With Ashratha at his right hand. (Deut.33.2 my translation)

The brilliance of the LORD and the angels included the Lady, and this is what Ezekiel saw.

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[53] There are three similar sounds in Hebrew: *s* and *ś*, both pronounced 's'; and *š*, pronounced 'sh'. Of these *s* and *ś* sound the same, but ś and *š* *look* the same in an unpointed text.

Beneath the cherub [sing.] Ezekiel saw a 'whirling' *galgal*, [sing.] (Ezek.10.2). This word, implying a circular motion, was used to describe a commotion: an enemy army moved swiftly, 'its whirling like a storm wind' (Isa.5.28, translating literally, so too Isa.17.13); or the storm of a theophany, 'the voice of your thunder was in the whirling' (Ps.77.18, translating literally); or the fate of enemies, 'O my God, make them like whirling, like chaff before the wind' (Ps.83.13, translating literally). When Ezekiel saw the chariot throne approaching the River Chebar, he did not use *galgal* but a different word with the same idea: *rûaḥ s*^{e}*'ārāh*, a storm wind/spirit coming from the north with a great cloud (Ezek.1.4). This is what Job saw too, when the LORD anwered him from the storm wind (Job 38.1).

The LORD told the 'man' dressed in linen to go into the whirling beneath the cherub [sing.] and fill his hands with fiery coals from among the cherubim [plural], and scatter them on the city (Ezek.10.2). When the 'man' went into the whirling among the cherubim [pl.], a cherub gave him some fire, and he emerged again. The text is not clear, and the Greek lacks some of the detail, but the scene is clearly the one replicated in two parts of John's vision in Revelation: the first where the angel [corresponding to Ezekiel's man clothed in linen] filled his golden censer with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth (Rev.8.1-5), prompting the seven angels to sound their trumpets; the second where the seven angels received bowls of wrath from one of the four living creatures of the throne, and poured them one by one onto the earth (Rev.15.5–16.21). For both Ezekiel and John, this was the destruction of Jerusalem. Another description of the destruction in 70 CE, attributed to Jeremiah's scribe Baruch, says that Jerusalem was set alight by the four angels with torches. They were told: 'Destroy the walls and overthrow their foundations, so that the enemies do not boast and say "We have overthrown the wall of Zion and we have burned down the place of the mighty God."'[54] The text in this chapter of Ezekiel may have become confused, since the seven angels bringing destruction to Jerusalem now appear in the previous chapter, but the extended sequence in Revelation, from the angel with the censer tipping his fire from the altar to the seventh angel pouring his bowl of wrath (Rev.8.3–16.21) has at its centre the mighty shining angel, wreathed in a rainbow, coming from heaven (Rev.10.1), and the Lady appearing in the holy of holies (Rev.12.1-6).

Then the throne moved away from the temple. First Ezekiel saw the glory by the north gate (Ezek.8.4) and then on the threshold of the temple (Ezek.9.3). The inner court of the temple was filled with the cloud (Ezek.10.3), and then the house was filled with the cloud and the court with the brightness of the glory of the LORD. The glory went from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim (Ezek.10.18), and finally, the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain to the east (Ezek.11.23).

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[54] *2 Baruch* 7.1.

Ezekiel also saw the glory return. He received a vision in the twenty-fifth year of his exile, that is, in 572 BCE, which was a jubilee year, exactly one jubilee [50 years] since Josiah's great purge. The Jubilee was proclaimed on the day of atonement, the day of Ezekiel's vision, which was the tenth day of the first month of the old calendar: 'Each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his family' (Lev.25.8-10). Ezekiel was taken to a mountain overlooking Jerusalem (Ezek.40.1-3) where he saw the glory return: 'and its sound was like the sound of many waters' (Ezek.43.2, my translation). The angel told him to teach the people about the correct temple and the correct way to live: 'You, son of Adam, describe the temple to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities/distortions and measure [up to] the plan' (Ezek.43.10, my translation). If Israel would purify the temple, then the LORD would return and dwell there for ever.

An angel with a measuring reed showed him the exact plan and measurements of the true temple that Israel had to restore, including the pictures on its walls (Ezek.41.15-26), and then Ezekiel saw the glory of the LORD return: 'And the vision which I saw was like the vision I saw when I [thus the Hebrew] came to destroy the city and like the vision which I saw by the River Chebar, and I fell down on my face' (Ezek.43.3, my translation of a rather confused text). The glory of the LORD then entered through the eastern gate and filled the temple, and Ezekiel was told to instruct the house of Israel in all the ways of the true temple, not just its plan and measurements, but the laws for temple worship and for daily life. Finally, he saw a river flowing from the temple with trees growing on its banks, whose fruit was for food and whose leaves were for healing (Ezek.47.1-12). In John's vision, this water of life was flowing from the throne in the holy of holies, around the tree of life which was the symbol of the Lady restored to her temple (Rev.22.1-2). Again, the question is: how long is memory? Did John and the early Church know the original significance of Ezekiel's vision, given that they knew the throne as a symbol of the Lady – or was this all John's innovation?

Ezekiel also *heard* the glory as it left Jerusalem: 'the sound of the wings of the cherubim, like the voice of Shaddai when it speaks' (Ezek.10.5, my translation). He heard the same sound by the River Chebar: 'I heard the sound/voice of the wings [of the living creatures] like the sound/voice of many waters, like the sound/voice of Shaddai, a sound of tumult like the sound of a host ...' (Ezek.1.24); and when the glory returned he heard 'its sound like the sound of many waters' (Ezek.43.2, translating literally). The LXX has 'the sound of the host was like many waters' and the Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* described the sound of the cherubim around the throne as 'the whispered voice of blessing [that] accompanies the roar of their advance'.[55] John also knew this sound: the risen LORD spoke with

[55] 4Q405 20.

a voice like many waters (Rev.1.15), and the sound of heaven was 'like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder' (Rev.14.2; 19.6).

The *Apocalypse of Abraham*, said by Epiphanius to be a book used by the Sethian Gnostics,[56] describes how Abraham saw the fiery throne. When he had prepared the sacrifice of the three animals and two birds (Gen.15.12-21), Abraham and the accompanying angel went up in the smoke of the sacrifice and there they were engulfed by the heavenly fire that sounded like many waters. Abraham and the angel joined in the heavenly song of praise, reciting the many names of the Eternal One and praying to receive a revelation. Then Abraham saw 'under the fire a throne of fire, and the many-eyed ones round about, reciting the songs under the throne of the four fiery living creatures, singing'. He saw their four faces and their six wings [the latter detail found in Isa.6.2], and behind the creatures was a chariot with fiery wheels full of 'eyes' and above the wheels was the throne. A voice spoke to Abraham from the midst of the fire, although no form is described, and then he learned the future of his people.[57] This text cannot be dated; it is thought to have had a Hebrew original compiled in the early years of the Christian era. The writer of the *Clementine Recognitions* knew the text – or rather, the material in it[58] – and the *Clementine Recognitions* are generally thought to stem from Hebrew-Christian circles. Thus the chariot throne vision was important to the early Hebrew Christians – as shown by the Book of Revelation which has the Lady reappear in the temple – and also to the earliest [possibly pre-Christian?] Gnostics who had a prominent place in their theology for a Lady named Barbelo, the fourfold God.[59]

In search of the Lady, however, it is necessary to look closely at the Hebrew text of Ezekiel, and to be aware of how many of the words are unknown or at best of uncertain meaning. There is a curious confusion of singular and plural forms: throughout chapter 10, for example, the living creature(s) can be cherub or cherubim. The same is true of the 'living creatures': throughout the chapter, 'living creature' is a *singular feminine* form, despite some English versions, and Ezekiel emphasised that the living creature was the cherubim, plural. Thus 'And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the living *creature* that I saw by the river of Chebar'; and 'This is the living *creature* that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew they were the cherubims' (Ezek.10.15, 20 AV, accurate translations).[60] Ezekiel saw a whirling underneath the cherubim who were the living creature, and over the cherubim/living creature was the sapphire throne, and their/her sound was like the voice of Shaddai.

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[56] Bishop of Salamis in Cyprus who died 403 CE, in *Panarion* 35.5.
[57] *Apocalypse of Abraham* 18.1-14.
[58] *Clementine Recognitions* I.32-33.
[59] We shall return to this, see below pp.305–28.
[60] The Jerusalem Bible has a singular; the RSV, GNB and NEB all have a plural, even though the Hebrew and the Greek have singular.

The key word is *ḥayyāh* which usually means a living thing or an animal, but it can also mean 'revival', 'new life', as in 'You found new life for your strength, and so you were not faint' (Isa.57.10). The root verb means to live, to have life, to sustain life, to revive from death [as in 'thy dead shall live ...' Isa.26.19]; and the adjectival form includes such meanings as 'living' water, i.e. flowing or fresh, most familiar in the Greek equivalents: 'living water' (Jn 4.10) or 'the water of life' (Rev.22.1). The written form is very similar indeed to the word *ḥawwāh*, Eve: 'Then the man called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living' (Gen.3.20). Retaining the singular form where it occurs in the text, and translating *ḥayyāh* as 'Living One' or even as 'life giver', Ezekiel's vision becomes very interesting indeed. 'This was the Living One/Life Giver that I saw by the River Chebar' (10.15); 'the Spirit of the Living One/Life Giver was in them [the wheels]' (10.17); 'She was the Living One/Life Giver that I saw beneath the God of Israel by the River Chebar ...' (10.20). LivingOne/Life Giver is not so very different from that obscured title for the Lady in the temple: 'the woman who creates'.

Substituting Living One for cherubim/living creature(s), which Ezekiel or his editor said were equivalent (Ezek.10.15), the vision was something like this: over the Living One was a sapphire throne, and beneath her a fiery whirling. When she was standing on the south side of the temple, the cloud of glory filled the inner court. When the glory of the Lord went up from her to the threshold of the temple, the temple was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the glory of the Lord. The sound of her wings was like the sound/voice of Shaddai. It is possible to read these texts as saying that 'the glory' was a separate being – the Lady who always accompanied the Lord.

There were four wheels and four faces/presences in the vision. Now the Hebrew consonants for 'wheel' here is *'wpn* (masc.), the word 'face/presence' is *pnh*, (masc.) and the word 'corner' or 'ruler' is *pnh* (fem.). All seem to come from the same verbal root *pnh*, meaning 'turn',[61] and thus there was considerable scope for wordplay but also for confusion or obfuscation between wheels, presences and corners. Ezekiel said that the wheels were like the sparkling of a yellow stone (Ezek. 1.16; 10.9),[62] and they were all constructed in the same way: 'as though the wheel was within the wheel' (Ezek.10.10). What this means is not clear, and there have been ingenious suggestions: 'each [wheel] had another wheel which intersected it at right angles' (thus GNB). Perhaps it just meant that the wheels looked like concentric circles of golden light, or maybe it meant they were set at right angles to each other. There must have been something unusual about the movement of the Living One, but, again, the verse is not clear: 'When they went in any of their four directions, they did not turn as they went,

[61] Thus BDB, op.cit., ch.4 n.2, pp.66, 819.
[62] Beryl, AV; chrysolite, RSV, JB; topaz, NEB; precious stones, GNB.

but they went to the place to which the head was turned and they did not turn as they went' (Ezek.10.11, my translation). There are several variants in the Greek, which suggests that the text was not clear even then: '... to whichever place the one leader looked, they went and they did not turn ...' is one possibility. The description of the Living One approaching the River Chebar also emphasised the movement. The creature(s) went straight forward without turning, 'wherever the Spirit would go' (Ezek.1.9, 12).

Ezekiel, as we have seen, also described something that had a circular 'whirling' motion, sometimes translated 'whirling wheels'. The word *galgal* can mean a wheel or a whirlwind, and identical letters mean a circle, as in the place name Gilgal (Josh.4.20, a circle of sacred stones). This 'whirling' was beneath the cherubim/Living Creature (10.2), and from its midst, the man in linen had to take fire (10.6). The next detail is also difficult: 'As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing the whirling wheels' (Ezek.10.13, RSV); 'As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel' (AV). It could mean 'In my hearing, the whirlwind was calling ...' Ezekiel was describing something/someone with a whirling at the base but which moved straight forward.

The detailed description of the wheels is also unclear (10.12). 'And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that they four had' is the AV; 'And their rims and their spokes and the wheels were full of eyes round about – the wheels that the four of them had' is the RSV; and 'Their whole bodies, their backs and hands and wings, were full of eyes all round the four of them' is the NEB. The text is virtually opaque.

'Their whole body', *kl bśrm*, is not in the LXX, nor is the meaning entirely clear: in fact, there is a problem with most words in Ezekiel 10.12.[63] The same words are found in the rule for purifying the Levites: 'Let them shave all their body ...' (Num.8.7). The word *bāśār* can mean 'body' in Ecclesiastes: 'Put away pain from your *body*' (Eccl.11.10); or 'Much study is a weariness of the *flesh*' (Eccl.12.12). The Vulgate has 'their whole body' in Ezekiel 10.12, *omne corpus earum*, but Jerome in his commentary on the passage noted that *bśr* meant 'flesh' not 'body': *non corpus sed carnem significat*.[64] Elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures *kol bāśār* [without the suffix 'their'] means 'all created things', and the distinction is sometimes made between 'all people' and 'all other creatures'. The rule for offerings to Aaron's family was: 'Everything that opens to womb of all flesh, whether man or beast, which they offer to the LORD, shall be yours ...' (Num.18.15) shows that *kl bśr* meant both humans and animals. So too in Noah's flood: *kl bśr* died – birds, cattle, beasts, swarming creatures and every human (Gen.7.21). On the other hand, *kl bśr* could mean just animals, as in: 'You shall not eat

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[63] Thus the apparatus criticus of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*.
[64] Jerome, *Commentary on Ezekiel* 3.10.102.

the blood of any creature, *kl bśr*, for the life of every creature *kl bśr*, is its blood ...' (Lev.17.14). Ezekiel used the phrase elsewhere to mean 'all livings things', and the sense seems to be humans and animals: 'All flesh shall see that I the LORD [have done it]' (Ezek.20.48, and similar in 21.4, 5). Isaiah too: 'All flesh shall see [the glory] together ... All flesh is grass' (Isa.40.5, 6); 'All flesh shall know that I am the LORD ...' (Isa.49.26, also 66.16, 23, 24). Moses and Aaron prayed: 'O God, *'l*, the God of, *'lhy*, the spirits of all flesh ...' (Num.16.22; cf. 27.16); and Elihu knew 'If he should take back his spirit to himself ... all flesh would perish together' (Job 34.14-15). 'Who is there of all flesh that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire?' (Deut.5.26).

Perhaps the most significant examples for understanding Ezekiel's vision are in the story of Noah. Everything that breathed, *kl bśr*, would be destroyed, and so two of every living thing of all flesh, *kl bśr,* had to be brought into the ark (Gen.6.17, 19). Here *kl bśr* is equivalent to 'everything in which is the spirit of life', v.17, and 'every creature', v.19. In Genesis 7.23, *kol-hay^{e}qûm*, 'all existence' is the equivalent of *kl bśr* in 7.21. Finally, when God established the everlasting covenant with Noah, it was 'my covenant with you that never again shall *kl bśr* be cut off ...' (Gen.9.11). The sign of the covenant was the rainbow: 'When the bow is in the clouds, I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of *kl bśr* that is upon the earth' (Gen.9.16); and the rainbow was a key feature of Ezekiel's vision. There was brightness round the human figure [or perhaps the entire chariot, the text could mean either] 'like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain ...' (Ezek.1.28); and the man in linen who threw burning coals onto the city was girded with a rainbow [or had an inkpot at his side]. John saw the throne encircled with a rainbow (Rev.4.3), and the angel whom he saw coming from heaven was wrapped in a cloud and had a rainbow over his head (Rev.10.1). The rainbow came to be seen as a sign of the presence of the LORD.[65]

Whatever was meant by *kl bśr* (Ezek.10.12), it was full of points of light, and, bearing in mind that whatever else the vision represented, it was the holy of holies and the throne as he knew it, what might it have been, all life as points of light? The *Book of Jubilees* has more detail than Genesis about the holy of holies, Day One of the creation. Whereas Genesis has only the material for public access, *Jubilees* has much more, and this is not necessarily a later expansion. It could be material that the canonical account omitted, especially as even the first three verses of Genesis, which describe Day One, could not be expounded to a student 'unless he understood of his own knowledge'.[66] The details of Day One were classed with details of the chariot as forbidden. Now the place where these two areas of forbidden

[65] See my book *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000, pp.264–5.
[66] Mishnah *Hagigah* 2.1.

teaching overlap is *Jubilees* description of the angels created on Day One, all the 'spirits which minister before him', which included 'all of the spirits of his creatures which are in both earth and heaven'.[67] If the being whom Ezekiel saw was the 'Living One', then the points of light could have been the spirits of all creatures which were with her or even in her.

The detail of Ezekiel 10.12 is no longer clear. The RSV has 'And their rims and their spokes and their wheels were full of eyes round about'; the AV, which translates literally, has 'And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about.' The very different translations are due partly to the fact that two Hebrew roots can give similar forms: *gbb*, meaning curved; and *gbh*, meaning high or exalted. In the vision, the word *gbhm* could refer to anything curved: 'their [masc.] backs' referring to the cherubim, or 'their rims', referring to the wheels. The comparable verse in Ezekiel's other account of the chariot has *gbyhn*, 'their [fem.] backs/rims', and 'their [masc.] height'[68] and 'their [masc.] *gbtm*, backs/rims' (Ezek.1.18). The word 'their wings' *kan*^{e}*pêhem* [not represented in the RSV] could also mean 'the edges of their robes' (as in Ezek.5.3 and 16.8), and 'their hands' *y*^{e}*dêhem*, could also be 'their axles' (as in 1 Kgs 7.32, 33) or their supports (as in Exod.26.17 'tenons' of the tabernacle frames or 1 Kgs 10.19 'arm rests' of the throne). It is possible that the words have different meanings in different parts of the vision. Did the cherubim have a human hand under their robes or under their wings, or were their wings like robes? (Ezek.10.8).

The cherubim had four faces (Ezek.10.14), and here again the text is not clear. The problem is; did each cherub have four faces, or were there four cherubs each with a different face?[69] John described the four living creatures round the throne as having one face each: the lion, the ox, the man and the eagle (Rev. 4.7). The Qumran text of Ezekiel[70] is fragmented at this point and offers no guidance, and some Greek versions omit this verse. The present Hebrew text is inconsistent: it begins 'each had four faces' but continues as though the cherubim had one face each: the face of the first the face of the cherub, the face of the second the face of a man, the face of the third the face of a lion, and the face of the fourth the face of an eagle. In the vision by the River Chebar, the four faces were a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle (Ezek.1.10), but the compiler of Ezekiel's prophecies made clear that the cherubim were the living creatures (Ezek.10.20). Perhaps by the compiler's time, this was something that had to be explained, in other words, the details of the throne were no longer known.

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[67] *Jubilees* 2.2.

[68] Thus Lxx, *hupsos*.

[69] W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Researches in Sinai*, 1906, figs 101–4 and 111 show capitals carved on each of four sides with the face of Hathor.

[70] 4Q Ezek^{a}.

The vision of the glory by the River Chebar, in the opening chapter of Ezekiel, says more about the throne chariot. It appeared in a stormy wind/spirit that came from the north, a great cloud and fire that was, literally, 'taking hold of itself', from the root *lqḥ*. This form is found only once elsewhere, describing the fire with the plague of hail in Egypt, and so the nuance is not certain (Exod.9.24). What is certain, though, is that a noun from the same root, *leqah* means learning/teaching. This curious cloud enclosed/was the four living creatures/cherubim, another word whose meaning is not known.[71] Whatever the actual etymology, Philo knew a meaning for 'cherub' that accords with no known etymology. He said the cherubim were *epignosis kai epistēmē pollē*, full knowledge and much understanding. They represented *epignosis pollē* and *epistēmē plousia kai kechumenē*, 'full knowledge' and 'a wealth of understanding poured out'.[72] Philo lived and thought within temple tradition, albeit writing in Greek. It seems that the cloud and its cherubim/living creatures/Living One evoked the idea of knowledge and understanding. Or perhaps we might say Wisdom.

There was brightness around the cloud, and in the midst of the fire there was the gleaming of *ḥašmal*. Nobody knows what this word meant either: the LXX guessed that it was electrum, a mixture of gold and silver; the AV guessed 'amber'; the RSV opted for bronze, although Hebrew has several other words for bronze, all from another root *nḥš*, so bronze is an unlikely meaning here. This otherwise unknown word is found only in Ezekiel's descriptions of the heart of the throne chariot, and it is used of the divine radiance: the *ḥašmal* was the likeness, *d*^{e}*mut*, of the four living creatures, or the fourfold Living One (1.4); it described the upper part of the human [not necessarily *male*] form on the throne (1.27); and it described the upper part of the fiery human figure who carried Ezekiel on his spirit-journey to Jerusalem (8.2).

In the midst of the vision of the living creatures/the Living One, that is, in the midst of the *ḥašmal* there was something like coals of fire, like a vision of torches, *lappidîm*. 'She' – the fire, a feminine noun, or who? – was walking around in the midst of the living creatures/the Living One. The fire flashed forth lightning, and the living creatures ran and returned like a flash of lightning (1.14), except that both 'ran' and 'lightning' are guesswork and translate similar looking words: the actual words *rṣw'* ['ran'] and *bzq* ['lightning'] are not known elsewhere. What Ezekiel actually described is now lost; key words cannot be translated. The suspicion that something has been deliberately obscured is strengthened by the imagery of 'torches'. This might be no more than a vivid description of the divine fire, were it not for the fact that a very similar word, but as a feminine form, appears as the name of Deborah's husband (Judg.4.4). Lapidoth is otherwise unknown as

[71] BDB, op.cit., ch.4 n.2 (1962), p.500 offers 'gracious, mighty, winged bull and thunder cloud' as possibilities.
[72] Respectively, Philo, *Moses* II.97 and *Questions on Exodus* II.62.

the name of a Hebrew man, but 'the wife of Lapidoth' could also be read as 'the Lady of torches'. Deborah, a female judge and prophetess who sat under her palm tree (Judg.4.4-5), was remembered in an ancient poem as a warrior leader who could summon the tribes to a great battle at Taanach – where the Lady's cult stand was found[73] – for whom the LORD would come from Seir and Sinai (Judg.5.4-5; cf. Deut.33.2), and for whom the very stars in the heavens would fight (Judg.5.20). What memory underlies this relatively late retelling of an ancient tale? The Lady of the torches whom Ezekiel saw leaving the temple? Was this the 'she' who was walking around amidst the flames?

The Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* are set within the same fiery scene, and show how the glory and the throne were imagined in the time of Jesus. Nobody knows when these *Songs* were written, but they obviously describe what Ezekiel described, and it is possible that they, or something similar, were known to Ezekiel. He described the glory leaving the temple; the *Songs* describe the worship around the glory whilst it was still within the temple. The imagery presupposes an illuminated holy of holies, and yet the biblical prescription does not have any lamp there. The lamp in the tabernacle was set outside the holy of holies (Exod.40.24), and the accounts of the temple in Kings and Chronicles do not mention any lamp beyond the veil. When John saw the Lady restored to the temple, he saw her as the seven torches before the throne, then giving birth to her son, and finally as the tree of life, *all in the holy of holies* (Rev.4.5; 12.4-5; 22.1-2). The original menorah must have been the tree of light in the holy of holies, and this was the 'asherah' that Josiah removed. The effect of this light within the golden cube of the holy of holies is accurately remembered in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*.

The multiple reflections of the seven lamps within the golden cube behind the multi-coloured curtain would have created the impression of a place of fire, flickering around the golden cherubim, and the high priest when he entered would have seen multiple reflections of himself, a man in white. This is what the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* describe: the reflection of the lamps and the woven temple veil within the golden interior, especially the prominence of the scarlet.[74] These are two short extracts:

> Angels of holiness go out from amidst the whirlings of his glory, with the appearance of fire, spirits of the holy of holies round about, the appearance of streams of fire in the form of *ḥašmal*, and the works of brilliance with the many colours of glory, and wonderful hues, and

[73] See above, p.154.

[74] I have experimented with a small scale model of the holy of holies, the veil and seven candles. The effect is exactly as the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* describe it, with the scarlet the most prominent reflected colour.

> purely blended. The spirits of the living *'elohîm* move constantly with the glory of the chariots.[75]
>
> At their marvellous stations are spirits, many coloured like the work of a weaver, engraved figures of splendour. In the midst of glory, the appearance of scarlet, colours of light, the spirit of the holy of holies, the most holy spiritual light, they hold to their station before the [k]ing, spirits, pure colours in the midst of an appearance of whiteness. The likeness of the spirit of glory is like a work of fine gold making light. All their woven work* is purely blended, like the work of a weaver ...[76]
>
> **ḥošeb* work, the special form of weaving for the temple veil (Exod.26.31) and the high priest's vestment (Exod.28.6).

The description in the *Songs* gives a better idea than Ezekiel's text of how the glory is understood, if not in his time – and here we can make no judgement either way – at least within the same cultural tradition.

Observing the similarity between some lines of the *Songs*[77] and Ezekiel 1.12-14, Carol Newsom wrote this, in the light of her work:

> These verses in Ezekiel are quite difficult but seem to describe not so much the appearance of the Hayyot as of the fiery substance which moves among them and flashes like lightning. This fiery substance is to be associated with that of v.4 and vv.27-28, where it is identified with the Glory. In the *Shirot* [Songs] the *fieriness of the Glory is interpreted as the appearance of fiery angelic spirits* ... In 4Q 405 22 also the appearance *of the Glory of God is not directly described, but is experienced as the multitude of angelic spirits* who appear to surround and move with the chariot throne.[78]

The glory was perceived as distinct from God, and was described as a host of angels. Hence Enoch's description of the lawgiving, which names neither Sinai nor Moses, but says that there were visions of 'the holy ones and the righteous ones'.[79]

This understanding of the glory on Sinai as a host of angels was widespread: Josephus knew it 'We have learned from God the most holy part of our law by angels ...'[80] as did the early Christians (Acts 7.53; Gal.3.19; Heb.2.2).

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[75] *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, Q405.20.ii.10-11, my literal translation.
[76] Ibid. 4Q405 23 ii.7-10, my literal translation.
[77] 4Q405 20-21-22 9-10.
[78] C. Newsom, *The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice. A Critical Edition*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985, pp.315, 316, my emphases.
[79] *1 Enoch* 93.6.
[80] *Antiquities* 15.5.3.

Philo too: 'By thy glory I understand the powers [angels] that keep guard around thee.' The context was Philo imagining Moses' encounter with the LORD; when he asked to see his glory, he was told that he could only see the LORD's back (Exod.33.17-23). Philo then put a remarkable explanation into the mouth of the LORD, showing how the powers/angels that comprise the glory were similar to the 'ideas' of Plato:

> The powers [that is, the glory] which you seek to know are not discerned by sight but by the mind, even as I, whose powers they are, am discerned by the mind and not by sight ... While in their essence they are beyond your grasp, they nevertheless show you as it were an impression and copy of their work. [He then describes making an impression on wax.] This is how you must imagine my powers, giving quality and shape to things which lack them, and yet changing and losing nothing of their eternal nature. Some among you call them, not inappropriately, 'ideas' *ideas*, since they bring form to each thing that exists, to the boundless, to the indeterminate, to the shapeless they bring limits, boundaries, and shapes, and in general they change what is worse into something better.[81]

Philo knew the link between the Plato's 'ideas' and the glory, and, as we shall see,[82] the Hebrew antecedent of Plato's ideas was known to Ezekiel and used to describe his vision of the glory.

The Cloud and the Glory

The details of whatever Ezekiel saw are now lost. What is clear, however, is that read without presuppositions as to what it must mean, the text could be describing the 'glory' as something/someone distinct from the LORD. Ezekiel described 'a great cloud, *'ānān*, with brightness round about it, and fire flashing forth continually', and the throne and the human figure that were the 'appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD' (Ezek.1.4, 28). This was written *before the Pentateuch as we now have it*. In other words, it is very likely the early readers/hearers of the Pentateuch imagined what Ezekiel had described when they heard of the cloud, the glory and the throne that settled on Sinai, or the cloud and the glory that came to the tabernacle, or the pillar of cloud in the wilderness.

There are references elsewhere to the individual aspects of the vision: Job knew that 'he encloses the presence of the throne,[83] spreading out his cloud, *'ānān*, upon it' (Job 26.9, my translation); the Psalmist knew that the temple

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[81] *On the Special Laws* I.45-48, my translation.
[82] See below, p.264.
[83] Reading *ks'* as *kissē'*, throne, as does the LXX *thronos*, rather than *kese'*, full moon.

was the dwelling place of the glory (Ps.26.8). Isaiah had the LORD say: 'I will be at rest and look out from my place, like dazzling heat in sunshine, like a cloud, *'āb*, of dew in the heat of harvest' (Isa.18.4); the Psalmist knew that the LORD rode on a cherub, on the wings of a wind/spirit, that he was surrounded by darkness and thick clouds, *'ābîm*, and that hailstones and coals of fire broke through his cloud (Ps.18.10-11). Another psalm shows that the clouds, *'ābîm*, were the LORD's chariot (Ps.104.3). Ezekiel, then, was not the first to use the imagery of the cloud enclosing the chariot throne, but he is the earliest example of the throne in the cloud being described as the likeness of the *glory* of the LORD. There is a similar case with the brief reference to the fallen angels in Genesis 6.1-4. It used to be assumed that this was the inspiration for later storytellers, who expanded it into the elaborate myth that now forms the framework of the Enoch tradition. Few would assume that position now, since it is clear that the myth of the fallen angels was fundamental in the first temple period, and the Genesis writer summarised what the readers/hearers already knew. It is interesting to ask what imagery might have been assumed by the first users of the Pentateuch, which was compiled after the destruction of the first temple and its culture: this must have been the imagery from Ezekiel, from other first temple writers, and even from their heirs who lived and thought outside the legacy of Josiah and the Deuteronomists.

The early material in Isaiah, for example, mentions the 'eyes of [the LORD's] glory' (Isa.3.8), which does imply that the glory was distinct from the LORD and was imagined in human form. 'For Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen; because their speech and their deeds were against the LORD, to rebel [against] the eyes of his glory' (Isa.3.8, translating literally). Scholars sometimes speak of a hypostasis, or a personification, but these are not likely to have been concepts familiar to Isaiah. As we have already seen, he spoke of 'the LORD' and then of 'the Holy One', in parallel, and there is good reason to believe that Isaiah envisaged the Holy One as distinct from the LORD. It is likely that here too he imagined two figures whom he thought distinct.[84] The glory of the LORD had eyes, and the archaeological evidence for the Lady in Jerusalem is the great number of pillar figurines with huge eyes.

Similarly, in his call-vision of the throne in the holy of holies, Isaiah heard the seraphim singing: 'Holy Holy Holy is the LORD of Hosts, his glory is the fullness of the whole earth' (Isa.6.3, translating literally). The LXX understood this line as 'the whole earth is full of his glory'. Here again, the pattern is 'the LORD' and then possibly another figure. The LORD was high and lifted up, enthroned; and his glory was filling the earth. This became an oath formula: '... as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD ...' (Num.14.21). There are several psalms where the

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[84] See above, pp.110–12.

glory on earth was contrasted with the LORD in heaven. 'O God, be high above the heavens, and let thy glory be upon the whole land' (Ps.57.5, 11// Ps.108.5, my translation). 'Blessed be the name of his glory for ever, and may his glory fill the whole land' (Ps.72.19, my translation). On the other hand, Psalm 113.4 declares: 'His glory is above the heavens ...' The problem here is the nature of the parallelism that characterises Hebrew poetry. As Strong observed: 'When Yahweh and his Glory are praised in parallel lines, is the author simply presenting his Glory as a metonym of Yahweh, or is he praising a distinct hypostasis alongside Yahweh? The answer would be obvious to the insider, familiar with the theological constructs of Jerusalem's royal theology, but difficult for the western reader 2,500 years later.'[85]

Elsewhere Isaiah prophesied the time when the earth would be full, not of glory, but of 'the *knowledge* of the LORD as the waters cover the sea' (Isa.11.9), suggesting that 'the glory of the LORD' meant the 'knowledge of the LORD', not in the sense of 'knowing the LORD' but rather knowing as he knew, knowing in the same way: the LORD's knowledge. This was Wisdom, whose origins were obscured by the correcting scribes when they changed the text of Proverbs 30.3.[86] Philo, as we have seen, knew that the cherubim of the throne represented 'full knowledge and much understanding', and so the cherub throne that represented the glory was also the symbol of knowledge. Habakkuk 2.14, which also links the glory and the knowledge, must be understood in the same way: 'For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.' The earth would be filled with the knowledge given by the glory of the LORD. Habakkuk contrasts the glory [from a root meaning heaviness] with dishonour [*qālôn*, from a root meaning lightness]: 'Your desire is satisfied with dishonour rather than glory ... and disgrace [*qîqālôn*, another word related to 'lightness'] will come on your glory' (Hab.2.16). Habakkuk cannot be dated, but Hosea, an older contemporary of Isaiah, used the same wordplay, showing that 'the glory' was a contentious issue at the time. The eternal covenant had been broken, he said, and the glory had gone.

> There is no faithfulness or kindness,
> There is no knowledge of God in the land ...
> Therefore the land mourns,
> And all who dwell in it languish ...
> My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge ...
> They have changed my glory into dishonour, *qālôn*. (Hos.4.1, 3, 6, 7, my translation)

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[85] J. T. Strong, 'God's *Kābôd*: The Presence of Yahweh in the Book of Ezekiel' in *The Book of Ezekiel. Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000, pp.69–95, p.74.

[86] See above, pp.144–5. It had originally been: 'God taught me wisdom, and I learned the knowledge of the holy ones.'

The last line has been altered by the correcting scribes:[87] the current Hebrew reads: 'I will change *their* glory into dishonour', with no mention of the glory of the LORD.

There have been similar changes elsewhere: 'his glory' or 'my glory' became 'their glory', an indirect indication that these texts referred to the Lady, since she was the object of so many scribal 'corrections'. At Horeb, the people 'exchanged his glory for the image of an ox that eats grass' (Ps.106.20, my translation). The Hebrew here is 'exchanged *their* glory ...'. Now the golden calf was presented to the people as the deity who had brought them out of Egypt (Exod.32.4, 8), and if this was the point of the contrast, the psalm implied that the glory had brought them out of Egypt. The biblical accounts do describe the LORD, or the angel of God, moving with the people in a pillar of cloud or fire as they escaped from Egypt: 'The LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the host of the Egyptians' (Exod.14.24). Later tradition remembered that *within the pillar of cloud was the throne of Wisdom*: '[Wisdom's] throne was in a pillar of cloud' (Ben Sira 24.4). Did the first users of the Pentateuch imagine the LORD enthroned within the pillar of cloud when he looked down on the Egyptians as the Israelites escaped from Egypt? This was how the story was imagined in Jerusalem in the early second century BCE. The psalmist was saying that the people exchanged the glory that brought them out of Egypt – the pillar of cloud and the throne – for the golden calf.

So too in Jeremiah 2.11, where the prophet described the new religion he was called to resist:

> Has a nation changed its gods,
> Even though they are not gods?
> But my people have changed *their glory*
> For that which does not profit.

The original text was 'changed *my glory* for that which does not profit'. The people had abandoned the glory of the LORD, which, in Jeremiah's time, had been the Lady. Thus in his lament for the 'virgin daughter' of his people, when the priests had no knowledge and the land was devastated and desolate, he linked together the name, the throne of glory and the covenant that brought rain, that is, the eternal covenant.

> Do not spurn us, for thy name's sake;
> Do not *dishonour* the throne of thy glory,
> Remember and do not break thy covenant with us ... (Jer.14.21, translating literally)

[87] See the apparatus criticus in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, ad loc.

'Dishonour', *nbl*, is a word with several meanings: it can mean to be without knowledge, or it can mean to droop or wither, as did the whole creation when sinners broke the everlasting covenant (Isa.24.4-5). Here, in Jeremiah's lament, the Lady had been severely wounded, and there was a danger that the throne of glory would be without knowledge and wither, and the creation covenant would be broken. To modern ways of thinking, this is a strange association of ideas, but to recover the Lady, we must think their thoughts, not ours.

Now if the Lady in Jerusalem was Wisdom, as we have argued, and also the glory, as we are suggesting here, 'the whole earth full of his glory' or 'the knowledge of the glory' indicates the manner of her divine presence on earth: the Lady was present in her knowledge of the creation. This too was remembered by those in Egypt who had not abandoned the Lady: 'She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things well' (Wis.Sol.8.1). Wisdom within the material creation would explain the enigmatic lines in Proverbs 8: '[Wisdom] was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world, and [her] delight was the sons of Adam' (Prov.8.30-31, translating literally). It would also explain Wisdom's words in Ben Sira's poem:

Alone I have made the circuit of the vault of heaven
And have walked in the depths of the abyss.
In the waves of the sea, in the whole earth,
And in every people and nation I have gotten a possession ...
I will again pour out teaching like prophecy,
And leave it to all future generations. (Ben Sira 24.5-6, 33)[88]

Just as it is impossible to understand the nuances of Hebrew poetic parallelism, so too it is impossible to enter into Isaiah's imagination, or Habakkuk's, or Hosea's, or Jeremiah's, or Ben Sira's, but the imagery in these words could refer to the Lady by her title of 'the glory' and her role as knowledge of the creation, that is, as Wisdom.

There are similar parallel titles [the LORD and then another figure] in Isaiah's oracle against the king of Assyria,[89] but here the parallels to 'the LORD' are both 'the glory' and 'the Holy One'. The image in Isaiah's mind here could have been what Ezekiel described: as the fiery whirling beneath the chariot throne that was the likeness of the glory of the LORD.

Therefore the Lord, the LORD of hosts,
Will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors,
And under his glory a burning will be kindled
Like the burning of a fire.

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[88] We shall discuss later who is speaking these lines, see volume 2.

[89] See above, pp.110–11.

The light of Israel will become a fire,
And his Holy One a flame ... (Isa.10.16-17a)

Then there are the the texts thought to be additions by later disciples of Isaiah. First, there is the vision of the future Jerusalem, when all the people are cleansed and the city is defended by the glory (Isa.4.2-6). There may be a hint of polemic here: the Branch of the LORD would be 'as the glory', v.2, and everyone in the city would be called 'Holy One'. Over the holy mountain and its assemblies there would be a cloud by day, and smoke and fire by night, as a canopy and a covering over all the glory. Presumably the fiery cloud on the holy mountain was how this disciple envisaged the presence of the glory, exactly how another disciple described the LORD reigning on Mount Zion, with the glory before his elders (Isa.24.23). Another (?later) writer would describe the presence of the LORD on Sinai in the same way: cloud, *'ānān*, smoke and fire (Exod.19.16-18); the cloud, *'ānān*, and glory (Exod.24.15-16), and the God of Israel seen by the elders of Israel (Exod.24.9-11).[90]

Second, there is the new Exodus, a new theme in the Isaiah school. The earlier Isaiah material did not use the Exodus theme, but if the Second Isaiah was writing after the fusion of the Moses tradition and the temple tradition, then it would have been a natural development for the later disciples of the temple prophet to present the return from Babylon as a journey across the desert. The Exodus theme occurs several times in the Second Isaiah: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD ... and *the glory of the LORD shall be revealed*' (Isa.40.3, 5); the LORD leading his people in a new way, using the image of *the LORD as the woman in travail* (42.14-16); the way through the waters (43.2); a way through the wilderness (43.19-21; 48.20-21); a new passage through the sea (51.9-10); an Exodus from Babylon (52.11-12). The glory of the LORD would be revealed, transforming the desert, bringing water to the dry land and restoring the blind, the deaf, the lame and the dumb (35.2-7). This fulfilled the prophecy after Isaiah's call vision: that the people who rejected Wisdom would lose her gift of perception and become blind, deaf and unable to understand, and the land would be devastated until she returned. The Second Isaiah developed this theme: the glory of the LORD was revealed and the desert land was transformed (40.4-5). The LORD [and the Holy One] were transforming the land as they passed (41.17-21; 43.19-21; 55.12-13). This is not an Exodus motif, but the fulfilment of the prophecy of the return of the Lady to restore the devastated land.

What might the prophet have imagined when he wrote 'They shall see the glory of the LORD' (Isa.35.2)? The glory that Ezekiel saw departing, crossing the desert to Babylon and later returning? In the new Exodus there was to be a way across the desert, but the Hebrew text is obscure at this point. 'It shall

[90] We shall return to this, see below p.263.

be called the way of the Holy One *for her*' (Isa.35.8, translating literally). 'The unclean shall not walk over it, [* * * *], fools, *'ewîlîm*, those who despise Wisdom, (as in Prov.1.7) shall not err in it.' The four words in the middle of the line are opaque. One reconstruction proposes: 'the fool shall go on his road and shall not err'. Here is another 'damaged' line that once referred to the Holy One and contrasted her with 'fools'. The whole passage could refer to the return of the Holy One, just as Ezekiel had seen the glory return to the temple.

The spiritual heirs of the refugees in Egypt, those who had not forsaken the Lady, told the story of the Exodus rather differently from the biblical account, but exactly as implied by these Isaiah texts. It was the Lady, Wisdom, who had inspired and strengthened Moses and had brought the people out of Egypt.

A holy people and a blamesless race
She delivered from a nation of oppressors.
She entered the soul of a servant of the LORD
And withstood dread kings with wonders and signs.
She gave to holy men the reward of their labours;
She guided them along a marvellous way,
And became a shelter to them by day,
And a starry flame through the night.
She brought them over the Red Sea,
And led them through deep waters;
But she drowned their enemies
And cast them up from the depth of the sea ...
She prospered their works
By the hand of a holy prophet.
They journeyed through uninhabited wilderness,
and pitched their tents in untrodden places. (Wis.Sol.10.15–11.2)

If this was how devotees of the Lady told their history, did they add her to their story, or did the compilers of the Pentateuch remove her?

The Second Isaiah pictures the glory leading her people back from Babylon.

Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, *herald of good tidings*;
Lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, *herald of good tidings*,
Lift it up and fear not;
Say to the cities of Judah,
'Behold your God, *'elohîm*'. (Isa.40.9)

'The herald of good tidings' is a *female* figure; the participle form is feminine, *mebaśśeret*. Zion brings good news, Jerusalem brings good news to the cities of Judah, that their God is returning. But there is wordplay here. The root *bśr* is that difficult word from Ezekiel's visions of the Lady that means 'flesh' and in the visions *kol bāśār* seems to mean 'all life' such as *Jubilees* described in the holy of holies: '[all the angels], and all the spirits of his creatures which are in heaven and on earth'.[91] Zion, the *mebaśśeret*, could also mean the lifegiver returning, together with the people's angels, *'elohîm*. The following verse proclaims the return of the Lord Yahweh, the shepherd, the one whom Micah described as the Lady's son. This passage in Isaiah describes the fulfilment of Micah's prophecy:

> Therefore he shall give them up until the time
> When she who is in travail has brought forth;
> Then the rest of his brethren shall return
> To the people of Israel.
> And he shall stand and feed his flock
> In the strength of the LORD,
> In the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. (Mic.5.3-4)

In the time of Isaiah, when the Lady had first been in danger, Micah had seen the daughter of Zion in travail, going to Babylon and then being redeemed from her enemies (Mic.4.10). Jeremiah had called on her to return: 'Return, O Virgin Israel, return, Lady, to your cities' (Jer.31.21, my translation).[92] Just as Ezekiel saw the glory return from the east, so too the Second Isaiah described her return: the glory of the LORD to be revealed (Isa.40.5).

Psalm 85, which describes the glory returning to the land, should be imagined in its temple setting: the people pray for forgiveness and restoration, and a prophetic voice responds that the LORD has words of peace for his people and his merciful ones, but not for those who turn back to 'folly', *kislāh*, from the root meaning 'to become stupid'. Those who had 'become stupid' were described elsewhere as the '*fools* who hate knowledge', who had rejected Wisdom (Prov.1.20-22). The voice in the psalm gives a glimpse of the land revived and the eternal covenant restored for the people who do not return to their ways of rejecting Wisdom. The glory returns.

> Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,
> For he will speak peace to his people,
> To his merciful ones, to those who do not turn back to stupidity.
> Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him,
> *So that glory will dwell in our land.*

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[91] *Jubilees* 2.2.

[92] See above, p.69.

> Mercy and faithfulness will meet;
> Righteousness and peace will kiss each other.
> Faithfulness will sprout from the ground
> And righteousness will look down from the heavens. (Ps.85.8-11, my translation)

In the Psalms there are a few glimpses of the meaning and context of the glory. Apart from the now-familiar ideas such as the heavens telling the glory of God (Ps.19.1) and the earth being filled with the glory (Ps.72.19), the singer who was seeking God, *'elohîm*, had seen a vision of power and the glory *in the sanctuary* (Ps.63.2). So too Jeremiah, who knew that the throne had been established 'from the beginning', that is, in Day One that was represented by the holy of holies: 'A throne of glory on high from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary' (Jer.17.12, my translation). Later Jewish tradition remembered that the throne of glory and the Law were two of the six things created before the material world,[93] but Proverbs 8.22 said that it was Wisdom who had been brought forth before the material world was made. Since the Law replaced Wisdom in many texts and teachings after the time of Josiah, it is likely that Wisdom and the throne of glory had originally been together in Day One, the holy of holies.

It is now generally agreed that the Pentateuch was compiled from older material and reached its present form in the early second temple period. The details of the process have fascinated and frustrated scholars for many years, and they may well be beyond recovery. The great events that preceded the compilation, however, must have left their mark: the purges in the time of Josiah when temple worship was changed and the Lady expelled, and the resulting fusion of the Exodus-Moses sagas with the King-Temple traditions. The meaning of words and ideas changed, as we have seen,[94] and amongst these were the cloud, the glory and Wisdom. The question to be asked yet again is: were the heirs of the older temple tradition who lived away from the immediate influence of second temple Jerusalem mistaken in their memories? There are frequent references in *1 Enoch* to the throne of glory,[95] showing a particular association of the glory and the throne; and there were also 'garments of glory',[96] elsewhere described as Wisdom (Ben Sira 6.31).

How would the familiar stories in the Penateuch be read if the cloud and the glory were imagined as Ezekiel described them?

When Ezekiel saw the glory leave the temple and cross the desert to Babylon, he saw the throne and a female figure. *The glory and the throne*

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[93] *Genesis Rabbah* I.4.
[94] See above, pp.166–73.
[95] *1 Enoch* 9.4; 14.19-21; 47.3; 55.4; 60.2; 62.2, 3, 5; 69.27, 29; 71.7.
[96] *1 Enoch* 62.16.

leaving the temple was the inspiration that made the fusion of the two traditions possible. The glory returning and leading the people back to their land was the new Exodus, and the desert tabernacle of the Moses saga became the primitive temple that moved through the desert. Sinai had long been the holy mountain of the temple tradition[97] and its summit the holy of holies, so when the Moses tradition was grafted into the temple tradition, he ascended Sinai where formerly the king had ascended the holy mountain in the royal rituals. Moses entered the holy of holies. It is clear that throughout the second temple period, Moses gradually assumed the role of the ancient kings.[98] Another Ezekiel [not the prophet] wrote a Greek-style play about the Exodus which is known only from the quotations used by Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria and Pseudo-Eustathius. He described Moses seeing the throne on Sinai, as in Exodus 24.9-10, and then being invited by the noble man on the throne to take his place. 'Man' here is the archaic and poetic word *phōs*, rather than *anēr*, doubtless because *phōs* can also mean 'light'. Exodus does not mention this; the *theosis* element of the temple cult is not in the biblical Sinai stories. Moses then received the crown and the sceptre, and from the throne he looked out on the whole of creation.[99] Both the new role of Moses as the king, and the new understanding of Sinai as the place where Moses became the king, are good examples of the fusion of the Moses saga and temple tradition. When Philo told the Moses-on-Sinai story, he too had the summit of Sinai represent the holy of holies, and he knew the *theosis* tradition of the old temple: Moses became divine. '[Moses] was named God and King of the whole nation, and entered, we are told, into the darkness where God was (Exod.20.21), that is, into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal and archetypal essence of existing things. Thus he beheld what is hidden from the sight of mortal nature ...'[100]

In texts that are identified on other grounds as coming from a priestly hand, the glory is first mentioned in the Sinai narratives, where it was seen in the cloud, *'ānān*, as the people were approaching Sinai (Exod.16.10). The first account of the Lord coming onto Sinai mentions 'a *heavy/thick* cloud', *'nn kbd* (Exod.19.16-19). Now *kābēd* does mean heavy, but the same consonants pointed *kābod* mean 'glory'[101] and so this too could be describing the cloud of glory. Moses entered the *'ărāpel*, 'thick darkness' (Exod.20.21). In a later part of this composite account, the people saw the glory come to the top of Sinai, and the cloud, *'nn*, covered the mountain. The glory looked like 'devouring fire' (Exod.24.16-17), and Moses actually entered the cloud. In both accounts of the consecration of the temple

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97 See above, pp.187–90.

98 W. A. Meeks, 'Moses as God and King' in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of E R Goodenough*, ed. J. Neusner, Leiden: Brill, 1970, pp.354–71.

99 This part from Eusebius, *Preparation of the Gospel*, IX.29.

100 Philo, *Life of Moses* I.158.

101 At Gen.31.1, usually translated 'wealth', and at Nah.2.9, usually translated 'treasure'.

(1 Kgs 8.10-11; 2 Chron.5.13-14), the priests withdraw from the temple when the cloud and the glory have filled it. In Ezekiel's vision, however, the man clothed in linen was summoned to enter the domain of the throne itself, within the courtyard filled with the cloud (Ezek.10.3-6); and in Daniel's vision, based on the coronation ritual described in Psalm 2, the human figure goes with the clouds to be enthroned.[102] Clouds around the throne were part of the temple image, (Ps.97.1-2), and so Moses entering the cloud is a sign of the early stages of fusing the traditions. Recall: when the Third Isaiah mocked the unworthy priests as 'sons of the sorceress' (Isa.57.3) he was playing on the similarity of the words 'cloud', *'ānān*, and sorceress, *'on^enāh*. His condemnation implies that the priests had been 'sons of the cloud'.[103]

Jewish tradition was that Moses, when he was in the cloud, saw the days of creation,[104] and so his experience was that of the later throne mystics. His eyes had been opened, which was the role of Wisdom. In how many of the Sinai and wilderness stories would the first hearers/readers have envisaged the throne as the Lady, as did Ezekiel? As with so much of the Sinai material, Exodus 24 is composite. Just before Moses ascended alone and entered the cloud, he had ascended with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and 70 elders. On Sinai they all saw the God of Israel with a sapphire pavement beneath his feet. This is what Ezekiel saw (Ezek.1.26), but the Hebrew text is ambiguous. Usually translated 'Above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire ...' the Hebrew literally reads: 'Above the firmament over their heads, the appearance of a sapphire stone, the form of a throne.' The firmament was sapphire, and so those on Sinai saw what Ezekiel saw. Ezekiel saw a 'form with the appearance of a man' on the throne; Moses and the elders saw the God of Israel, but no throne is mentioned. Presumably they saw the throne too. The Deuteronomist, however, denied that any form had been seen: the fire and the cloud had led the people in the wilderness (Deut.1.33) and were seen at Horeb (that is, Sinai, Deut.4.11-12), but no form, *t^emûnāh*, was seen. This must have been one of the points of dispute between the Deuteronomists and the earlier traditions: the cloud and the glory did not reveal a 'form' – a human or a throne – which is consistent with the D historian failing to mention that there was a chariot throne in the temple. There is no D parallel in 1 Kings to the description of the golden chariot of the cherubim in the temple (1 Chron.28.18).

Moses seeing the LORD was disputed elsewhere too. Another fragmented and composite account (Exod.33.7-23) shows something of the issues. In the final section, Moses asked to see the glory of the LORD, and the LORD

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[102] The theme of A. Bentzen, *King and Messiah*, London: Lutterworth Press, 1955. J. Emerton, 'The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery', Journal of Theological Studies NS vol.IX.2 (1958), pp.225–42, p.232, found difficulties with this. 'The Son of Man in Dan.vii seems, therefore, to play the part of Yahweh in the enthronement festival. *How then can he be the Davidic king?*', my emphases. How scholarship has changed since then!

[103] See above, p.103.

[104] See my book *The Great High Priest*, London: T&T Clark, 2003, pp.152–5.

replied: 'You cannot see my face/presence, for the human shall not see me and live' (Exod.33.18, 20, translating literally). This shows that *the glory was equivalent to the presence or face*, and it contradicts what was said earlier in the chapter, that Moses would speak to the LORD face to face when the pillar of cloud came down to stand at the door of the tent of meeting (Exod.33.7-11). This enigmatic text could imply that the LORD was in the pillar of cloud, presumably on the throne of Wisdom (Ben Sira 24.4). There is a similar pairing of words in Psalm 17.15:

> As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness,
> When I awake, I shall be satisfied with beholding thy form, *t^emûnāh*.

The LXX translated 'form' as 'glory'. Thus the glory was understood as the form, the face or the presence, and the possibility of seeing the glory or the pillar of cloud or the face/presence of the LORD was denied by the compilers of Exodus. Presumably these were also the people who had problems with the meaning of the high priestly blessing – 'may the LORD make his presence shine on you' – and with the ancient calendars which said pilgrims to the temple would see the face of the LORD.[105]

After the Sinai story, traces of two 'tent' traditions can be detected in the Pentateuch: the tent of meeting outside the camp, *'ohēl mô'ēd*, and the tabernacle, *miškān*, in the midst of the camp (Exod.25.8-9). The tent of meeting was where Moses went to meet the LORD, and when he did so, the pillar of cloud came down and stood at the door of the tent (Exod.33.7-11); the glory of the LORD also appeared at the door of this tent (Num.14.10; 16.19; 20.6); and the glory appeared as the cloud covered it (Num.16.42). It seems that the writers did not mention every aspect of the phenomenon when it occurred, and so too much weight cannot be put on whether or not the cloud or the pillar or the glory was mentioned at any one time. Embedded in the prescription for building the *tabernacle* is the promise that the glory would appear at the altar before the door of the *tent of meeting*: 'There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory; and I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar' (Exod.29.43-44). Aaron was instructed how to offer sacrifice before the door of the tent of meeting (Lev.9.1-6), and when Moses and Aaron emerged from the tent, 'the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people' and fire consumed the sacrifices (Lev.9.23-24).

The other tent was the tabernacle which was a miniature temple, divided by a veil, and furnished with the ark, the golden table and the menorah (Exod.25.10-40; 26.31-33). When the tabernacle was consecrated, the glory of the LORD filled it (Exod.40.34). The descriptions of the tabernacle and the tent of meeting represent two distinct ways of joining the traditions: perhaps

[105] See above, p.167.

the priests from Jerusalem envisaged a miniature tabernacle in their fusion of the Moses and the Jerusalem traditions, and the people who brought the Moses sagas to the mixture envisaged a desert tent. The final compilers of the Pentateuch did not intend them to be distinct. Or so it seems. Exodus ends by setting the two tents in parallel: 'Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle (Exod.40.34-35). The matching account in 1 Kings, which describes the consecration of Solomon's temple has the cloud and the glory fill the temple: '... a cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD' (1 Kgs 8.10-11).

Then there was the pillar of cloud, *'ammûd 'ānān*, which led by day and was a pillar of fire, *'ammûd 'ēš*, by night (Exod.13.21, 22). The pillar of cloud moved with the angel of God/angel of the *'elohîm*, and went behind the Israelites when Pharoah was pursuing them (Exod.14 19). In the morning the LORD looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud onto the army of Egypt (Exod.14.24), and, as we have seen, a writer in second century BCE Jerusalem knew that within the pillar of cloud was the throne of Wisdom (Ben Sira 24.4). The pillar of cloud stood at the door of the tent of meeting when Moses was talking to the LORD (Exod.33.9-10), and the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud to speak to Aaron and Miriam (Num.12.5). The overshadowing cloud and the pillar appear together: 'Your cloud *stands* over them, and you go before them in a *pillar* of cloud by day and a *pillar* of fire by night' (Num.14.14), but there is wordplay here: 'stands', *'omēd*, and 'pillar', *'ammûd*, are both written *'md*, and this may be further evidence of fusing the traditions. The only reference to the cloud and the pillar in Deuteronomy is a confused Hebrew text, but the LXX has 'The LORD came down in a cloud, and stood by the doors of the tent of meeting, and the pillar of cloud stood by the doors of the tent' (Deut.31.15). As with the two tents, so with the overshadowing cloud and the pillar of cloud, the final editors of the Pentateuch presented them as one and the same, which may be why the throne of Wisdom was depicted as being within the pillar of cloud as well as within the cloud that surrounded the temple throne. One strand of the fusion of Moses and temple traditions was the cloud overshadowing the desert tent that came to resemble the temple; the other was perhaps a beacon of fire that eventually became the cloud enclosing the throne of Wisdom.

Later memories were consistent that the Lady 'was' the throne, and that the cloud was the sign of her presence. Jacob of Serug, as we have seen, composed a homily 'On that Chariot that Ezekiel the prophet saw' and knew that the chariot throne was an image of the Virgin Mother; and the Akathist Hymn also described Mary as the chariot-throne: 'Thou art the throne of the King ... O Lady, fiery chariot of the Word ... all-holy chariot of Him Who sitteth upon the cherubim ...' Mary was also hailed as 'the

pillar of fire that guides those in darkness, the protection of the world wider than the cloud'.[106] Either the Christian writers of the sixth century CE engaged in a complex research exercise to recover images of the Lady in the temple, before composing their hymns and homilies, or else they were heirs to an unbroken tradition that knew more about the signs and symbols of the Lady than is apparent to the methods of modern critical biblical scholarship. S. Bulgakov, in his book *The Burning Bush*,[107] gives many examples of throne chariot imagery used for Mary. Take just two: 'We glorify you the throne of the Word of God, O Theotokos, on which as a man God appeared seated, and you are higher than the cherubim.' Bulgakov commented: 'In St Andrew of Crete, we come across a general indication that among the fathers, the appearance of the glory to Ezekiel signified the Theotokos.'[108] Then there is the image of Mary as the mountain overshadowed by a thicket,[109] an epithet drawn from the LXX, but not the Hebrew, of Habakkuk 3.3:

> God will come from Teman,
> And the Holy One from Mount Pharan *overshadowed with a thicket*,
> His virtue covered the heavens,
> And the earth is full of his praise.

The current Hebrew is:

> Eloah came from Teman,
> And Holy One from Mount Paran,
> His majesty covered the heavens
> And his praise filled the earth.

The LXX must have had a longer text that included the 'thicket'. Now 'thicket' is one of the meanings of the Hebrew word *'āb*, cloud, used to describe the dwelling of the LORD in Isaiah 18.4, where the LXX has *nephelē*. By choosing the other meaning of *'āb*, the translator of Habakkuk 3.3 had a thicket on the mountain top and not a cloud, and yet *even with this mistranslation, the memory persisted that this verse referred to the Lady.* The 'cloud' must have disappeared from the Hebrew text after Habakkuk was translated into Greek.

The throne is here too.

[106] Akathistos Hymn, Ikos 6.
[107] S. Bulgakov, *The Burning Bush. On the Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God*, tr. T. A. Smith, Grand Rapids and Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2009, esp. pp.117–30.
[108] Ibid., p.178.
[109] Ibid., p.117.

His virtue covered the heavens, *kissāh šāmayim hôdô*
And the earth is full of his praise, *ûtehillātô māle'āh hā'āreṣ*.

Could also be read:

[The] throne of heaven is his splendour
And the fullness of the earth is his praise.

This couplet would then be very like the song of the seraphim in Isaiah 6. And the context is also interesting. This section of Habakkuk begins with the LORD in his holy temple and the earth silent before him (Hab.2.20), and then the LORD appears. The Greek text of Habakkuk 3.2 is longer than the present Hebrew, which shows that the translator was working with a longer Hebrew text. The beginning and end of the verse are not a problem, but the middle line makes little sense. The present Hebrew gives:

LORD I have heard report of you, LORD I have seen [or feared] your work,
In the midst of the years renew it, in the midst of the years make it known,
In the tumult remember mercy. (Hab.3.2, my translation)

The Greek, however, has someone between the two living creatures of the throne:

You will be known in the midst of the two living creatures,
When the time draws near you will be recognised,
When the right time comes you will be shown forth
When my soul is disturbed you will remember mercy in your wrath. (Lxx Hab.3.2, my translation)

The Hebrew text of the middle section is: *bqrb šnym ḥyyhw/ bqrb šnym twdy'*, and from this the Greek translator read *ḥyyhw as ḥyywt*, living creatures, perfectly possible in the context of a theophany, but for 'two' one would expect *šty*. The Hebrew invites reading *šnym* as 'years', and so the Greek has *etē*, years and then *kairos*, the right time, but the resulting text makes little sense. One possible solution would be to read the italicised Hebrew as 'In the midst of the two living creatures you will be known', assuming that the two identical sets of consonants *bqrb šnym* ... *bqrb šnym* are an erroneous duplication. There are, however, other possibilities. That *šnym* here means what it does in Isaiah 1.18: scarlet; or that it means 'exalted/shining', from a root *šānāh*, which would give the sense 'glory/honour' in several passages: '... lest you give your honour to others, and your *years* to the merciless' (Prov.5.9); or 'A man of quick temper acts foolishly, but a man of discretion

is *hated* (Prov.14.17, my translation). In each case 'honour' makes more sense.[110]

Habakkuk was describing a theophany; there was brightness like light, rays from his hand, and the LORD appeared to judge the earth. The Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, as we have seen, give more detail about the throne and the glory than in the Hebrew Scriptures, and in the midst of the exalted and shining ones there was the 'appearance of scarlet' – the only colour mentioned apart from gold and white.[111] Either translation makes sense. The lines may once have described the LORD making himself known amidst the cherubim or the glorious ones or the scarlet [fire]. Nothing can be said with certainty except that this is another altered or 'damaged' text, and could once have described the cloud, the throne and the living creatures as the LORD came in judgement, an ancient poem which, like the 'Blessing of Moses' (Deut.33.2-5) had the Lady coming with the LORD. Despite the LXX translation 'thicket', the Christians knew that this theophany included the Lady, which must, surely, show that their images for Mary antedate the translation of the LXX and were drawn from a living pre-Christian tradition about the Lady.

Pythagoras and Plato

There are glimpses of the Lady even in the writings of Plato. In his *Timaeus* there was an extraordinary description of the Living Creature, *zōon*, that held within itself all living creatures. The story was told by Timaeus, a follower of Pythagoras, and it was deemed 'admirably suited to *the festival of the Goddess* which is now being held, because of its connexion with her'.[112] The story told the origin of the Cosmos, and described a curious phenomenon that could once have been Ezekiel's Living One [the goddess?], making allowances for the change of language and the hazards of transmission.[113] But how could Pythagoras have known about Ezekiel's Living One?

Pythagoras left no writings, and so the earliest source for his teaching is Philolaus of Croton, born about 475 BCE. One tradition says he wrote three books, or that he possessed three Pythagorean books; another that he wrote one book about Pythagoras's teachings, and there were various stories about how Plato came to possess a copy: he bought it or he was given it as a gift. The earliest reference is in Timon the sillographer [died about 230 BCE] who said of Plato: 'You paid a lot of silver for a little book, starting from

[110] J. A. Emerton, 'The meaning of ŠĒNĀ' in Psalm CXXVII 2', Vetus Testamentum XXIV.1 (1974), pp.15–31.
[111] See above, p.253.
[112] *Timaeus* 26E, my emphases.
[113] Living Creature is *zōon* in *Timaeus*, and also in LXX Ezek.10.15, 20 when the Living Creature is identified as the cherubim. Elsewhere in Ezekiel, the Living Creatures is plural, *zōa*.

which you learned to write the *Timaeus*.' Whatever the truth, 'the fragments we have from [Philolaus'] book do show a general similarity in content to the *Timaeus*'. Further, 'All the basic conceptual terms which Aristotle assigns to the Pythagoreans are also found in Fragments 1-7 of Philolaus.' These were the generation of the cosmos, the harmony of the cosmos, and the fire at the centre of the universe.[114] Philolaus, then, is a reliable source for the teaching of Pythagoras, and ancient sources witness that his account of the teachings of Pythagoras had passed into Plato's *Timaeus*. Timaeus himself, after whom the dialogue was named, was a follower of Pythagoras, and was introduced as 'Timaeus, who knows more about astronomy than the rest of us, and who has devoted himself particularly to studying the nature of the universe ...'[115] Cornford, drawing on a wider spectrum of evidence than the fragments of Philolaus, concluded that the 'pivotal conceptions' of [Pythagoras's] teaching were the ideal of becoming like God; the notion of *mimēsis*, the correspondence of macrocosm and microcosm, the conception of harmony; and the symbol known as the *tetraktys*.[116]

Later tradition remembered that Pythagoras was born in Phoenicia, in about 570 BCE, the son of a merchant from Samos, and Ezekiel knew of such traders. He described Tyre as the city that traded with Javan (Ionia) for slaves and bronze vessels (Ezek.27.13),[117] and Second Isaiah looked for the return of the LORD's people 'from the west' (Isa.49.12). The alphabet Ezekiel used was very like the Phoenician letters that became the Greek alphabet, and even the words used by traders passed from the Levant to Greece: the Hebrew word for sack, *śaq*, is the Greek *sakkos;* measuring rod, *qāneh*, is the Greek *kanōn*; *ḥārûṣ*, fine gold is the Greek *chrusos*; *k^etonet*, tunic, is the Greek *chiton*; *bûṣ*, fine linen, is the Greek *bussos*. Archaeological evidence shows that on Samos 'the influx of oriental goods seems to begin before 700'.[118]

The 'Lives' of Pythagoras that survive were all written centuries later, when much legendary material had accummulated around him. According to Iamblichus' *Life*,[119] written in Syria in the early fourth century CE, Pythagoras was taught by Phoenician hierophants and was 'initiated in all

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[114] C. A. Huffman, *Philolaus of Croton. Pythagorean and Presocratic*, Cambridge: University Press, 1993, pp.12–13, 28.

[115] *Timaeus* 27A.

[116] F. M. Cornford, 'Mysticism and Science in Pythagorean Tradition, part i', Classical Quarterly XVI (1922), pp.137–50, p.142. I set out in detail the correspondences between Pythagoras and the teaching of the first temple in my book *The Great High Priest*, London: T&T Clark, 2003, pp.262–93.

[117] There is archaeological evidence for Greeks in Jerusalem at this time; B. Sass, 'Arabs and Greeks in Late First temple Jerusalem', Palestine Exploration Quarterly (Jan.–June 1990), pp.59–61.

[118] W. Burkert, *The Orientalising Revolution. Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1992, p.17.

[119] Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras*, tr. T. Taylor, London (1818) 1965.

the mysteries of Byblos and Tyre and into the sacred operations which are performed in many parts of Syria'. At one time he lived in a Phoenician temple on Mount Carmel, before travelling to Egypt and then to Babylon. Jewish, Christian and Gentile writers all claimed that Pythagoras had learned from the ancient teachings of the Jews: Aristobulus, an Egyptian Jew writing in the mid-second century BCE, said that Hebrew learning had been known to the Greeks. There had been a Greek translation of the Law of Moses, he said, before the time of Alexander the Great, and Plato drew on it. Further, he said, 'Pythagoras ... transferred many of our doctrines and integrated them into his own system of beliefs.'[120] Josephus, demonstrating to Apion the antiquity of Jewish belief, said: 'Pythagoras ... lived in very ancient times, and was esteemed a person superior to all philosophers, in wisdom and piety towards God. Now it is plain he did not only know our docrtrines, but was in very great measure a follower and admirer of them.' He then quoted from the Gentile Hermippus of Smyrna *On Pythagoras,* written about 200 BCE. 'Pythagoras ... spoke in imitation of the doctrines of the Jews and the Thracians which he transferred to his own philosophy.' Josephus continued: 'For it is truly affirmed of this Pythagoras that he took a great many of the laws of the Jews into his own philosophy.' He gave other examples of Jews in contact with Greek philosophers and told Apion of Aristotle's debate with a learned Jew in Asia Minor.[121]

It was widely accepted in the ancient Christian world that Pythagoras was inspired by Hebrew learning: Clement of Alexandria, writing about 200 CE, repeated Aristobulus' claim: 'Pythagoras transferred many things from our books to his own system of doctrines'; and added: 'And Numenius the Pythagoraean philosopher expressly writes "For who is Plato but Moses speaking Attic Greek."'[122] Origen was certain that Pythagoras had taken his ideas from the Jews. 'Hermippus has recorded in his first book *On Lawgivers* that it was from the Jewish people that Pythagoras derived the philosophy which he introduced among the Greeks.'[123] Eusebius, a contemporary of Iamblichus, devoted much of his great work *The Preparation of the Gospel* to showing how Greek writers had drawn on Hebrew sources, and emphasised the relative dates of the ancient Greek philosophers and the Hebrew teachers. 'If therefore it could be shown to you that Plato and his successors have agreed in their philosophy with the Hebrews, it is time to examine the date at which he lived, and to compare the antiquity of the Hebrew theologians and prophets with the age of the philosophers of Greece.'[124] Pythagoras, he said, 'spent some time with the Persian magi and became

[120] Aristobulus, quoted in Eusebius, *Preparation of the Gospel* XIII.12.
[121] Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.22.
[122] Clement, *Miscellanies* 1.22; and elsewhere too, e.g. *Misc.*5.14, that Plato took from the Hebrews.
[123] Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.15; quoted also in Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.22.
[124] Eusebius, *Preparation of the Gospel* X.14.

a disciple of the Egyptian prophets at the time when some of the Hebrews appear to have made their settlement in Egypt and some in Babylon'.[125] The dates are all-important: Pythagoras was living among the people who had been scattered from the first temple community in Jerusalem, and so, if he had had any contact with Hebrews, *they would have been people from the first temple.* Ezekiel, who gives a glimpse of priestly thought and language at the time, received his visions in the early sixth century BCE; the Second Isaiah, who used much 'Pythagorean' language, lived a few years later. Plato, whose *Timaeus* includes so much Pythagorean teaching, died in 348 BCE. There can be no question of who was dependent upon whom if a link can be shown.

The series of disasters – Josiah's purge in 623 BCE and the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and exile of her people in 597 BCE and 586 BCE – means that Hebrew priests had been displaced from their shrines and temple during the 50 years before Pythagoras was born. In Josiah's time the priests of the high places were dispossessed and their shrines destroyed, but the priests themselves retained something of their status. They could not serve at the altar in Jerusalem but they could eat the priests' bread (2 Kgs 23.9).[126] Some priests, then, stayed near enough to visit the temple in Jerusalem. Some, such as Ezekiel, were taken to Babylon, some settled in Arabia;[127] and some, such as Jeremiah, went to Egypt with the refugees. Pythagoras could have met first temple priests on his travels. We know nothing from the Bible about priests going north, but there are fragments of information, both archaeological and in ancient texts, suggesting the presence of Yahweh priests in Phoenicia where Pythagoras was born.

The problem with many ancient texts is that they are only known from quotations in much later authors and so have been detached from their original context. Eusebius of Caesarea, quoting a lost work of Porphyry, knew of a Yahweh priest in Phoenicia. 'Of the affairs of the Jews ... the truest history is that of Sanchuniathon of Berytus [Beirut], who received the records from Hierombalus the priest of the god Ieuo. He dedicated his history to Abibalus king of Berytus.'[128] The king's name cannot be identified and dated, but the god Ieuo can only be a Greek form of the name Yahweh. Eusebius also quoted from Philo of Byblos who wrote in the first century CE. The Phoenicians, he said, had a high god named Elioun, meaning 'the Most High' and a high goddess named Beruth. These names are very similar to Elyon, 'most high' and *b^{e}rith*, covenant, familiar from the Hebrew Scriptures, especially as the Lady was closely associated with the eternal covenant, *b^{e}rith 'olam*. A rainbow in the cloud, her cloud, *'ānān*, had been

[125] Eusebius, *Preparation of the Gospel* X.14.
[126] See above, p.12.
[127] See above, pp.14–16.
[128] Eusebius, *Preparation* I.9, citing Porphyry, *Against the Christians*.

the sign of the eternal covenant revealed to Noah (Gen.9.8-17), and, as we have seen, this story was originally told of Shaddai, the Lady.[129] A man girded with a rainbow appeared with the glory in the temple, but he received the attention of the correcting scribes and became a man with an inkpot (Ezek.9.3).

Biblical evidence shows close links between Phoenicia and Jerusalem. Hiram king of Tyre sent materials and craftsmen to build the temple in Jerusalem, and there was no problem with alien craftsmen building the house of the LORD. The D writer, who had no love for Solomon or his temple, made no comment on the alien workers. Were they perhaps worshippers of the LORD too? Phoenician inscriptions have been found with Yahwistic names: *mtn ʿštrt* son of *ʿzryhw*, where the son's name is Phoenician in form and means 'gift of Ashtarte', and the father's is the biblical Azariah, 'Yahweh has helped'. Another name was *šlm* son of *ʾspyhw*, where the father's name means 'Yahweh has gathered' and so is Hebrew in form even though not found in the Bible. 'It may be that if there was a Phoenician cult of Yahweh; the name was popularly used here as a theophoric element in naming.'[130] Stern concluded that the Israelites and Phoenicians shared a temple on the summit of Mount Carmel during the time of David and Solomon, famously the site of Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18.20-40),[131] and the temple where Pythagoras lived in his youth.

There is also the teaching of the Jerusalem priests to consider: how similar was it to that of other cultures in the area, and how widely was it known? If, as we have been suggesting, the Lady of the first temple in Jerusalem was Wisdom, one of whose symbols was the sun, then the fragments of evidence for ancient Phoenician solar theology are significant. In the mid-fourth century CE, the Roman emperor Julian wrote a 'Hymn to King Sun', ['*The Solar Pericope*'] in which he said: 'But according to the opinion of the Phoenicians, who are skilled in the divine science and wisdom, the universally diffused splendour of light is the sincere energy of intellect illumining in its proper habitation the middle region of the heavens; and from this exalted situation scattering its light, it fills all the celestial regions with powerful vigour, and illuminates the universe with divine and incorruptible light.' The sunlight 'was' knowledge, very similar to the biblical texts which equate the glory and knowledge.[132] This is supported by evidence for Yahweh in Phoenicia from John Lydus, a Christian scholar in Constantinople in the sixth century CE, writing on *The Months*. Discussing March, he observed: 'The Roman Varro ... says that with the Chaldeans in the mysteries he is called Iao in the Phoenician tongue, rather than "the

[129] See above, pp.219–22.
[130] J. Azize, *The Phoenician Solar Theology*, Piscataway NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005, p.256.
[131] E. Stern, 'Phoenicians, Sikils and Israelites in the Light of recent Excavations at Tel Dor', in *Phoenicia and the Bible*, ed. E. Lipinski, Leuven: Brill, 1991, pp.85–94, p.93.
[132] Azize, p.256.

light of the mind", *phōs noētov*, as [Philo of Byblos] says.'[133] This must have been Isaiah's 'the light of the LORD' (Isa.2.5). In the *Annals* of George Cedrenus, this became the noetic light 'understood as Êāō ... and Sabaoth ... who is the Demiurge.'[134] As Azize observed: 'Philo's [of Byblos] reference in the first century CE to noetic light [*phōs noētov*] strengthens the argument that Julian's *Solar Pericope* contains authentic ancient Phoenician material, not dependent on Neoplatonism.'[135] This is important for locating correctly the origin of Pythagoras's system. Elements characteristic of Pythagoras and of Plato, and then of later developments, have their roots in the Levant, very likely in the teaching of first temple Jerusalem priests.

Some striking features in Pythagorean teaching can best be explained by contact with Jerusalem temple tradition, and here we look at the three that are immediately relevant to Ezekiel's visions: the fire at the centre of the universe, the importance of numbers for understanding the creation – both recognised as characteristic of Pythagorean teaching – and the system of Forms, set out in the *Timaeus*.[136] If the correspondences are too great for coincidence, this can be the basis for comparing the Living Creature in *Timaeus* and the Living One in Ezekiel's visions. The evidence for the Living Creature/Living One is not in itself sufficient to establish the link between them, but in the context of other striking similarities, the link between the first temple and Pythagoras would be all but certain.

The Cube of Fire

First, there was the Pythagorean belief that at the centre of the universe was a cube of fire, and next to it, the 'counter-earth', *antichthōn*. Kingsley described the central cube of fire as 'One of the most vexed questions in the history of Greek philosophy',[137] but the origin is obvious to anyone familiar with the lore of the Jerusalem temple. We do not know if the Phoenicians had similar teaching, but there can be no doubt that the cube of fire was the holy of holies in the Jerusalem temple. The holy of holies represented the origin and heart of the creation, and was a 20-cubit cube lined with gold (1 Kgs 6.20). It represented the light that preceded the material creation, Day One, but Philo knew the holy of holies as a place of darkness, and in his time it was dark and empty. If the menorah that represented the Lady had

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133 Lydus, *De Mensibus,* ed. R. Wuensch, Stuttgart: Teubner, 1967, V.53.

134 Lydus, op.cit., note at IV.53. George Cedrenus was a Byzantine historian in the eleventh century CE.

135 Azize, p.xi.

136 For detail of other aspects see my book *The Great High Priest*, London: T&T Clark, 2003, pp.178–84 and 262–93.

137 P. Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery and Magic. Empedocles and the Pythagorean Tradition*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1995, p.172.

been removed by Josiah, and the second temple menorah was set in the outer part of the temple, as prescribed for the tabernacle which was influenced by the usage of the second temple (Exod.40.24-25), this would have meant a holy of holies without light in the second temple. The Lady, as John knew, was restored to the holy of holies as the sevenfold torches before the throne (Rev.4.5), or as the tree of life by the throne (Rev.22.2). In the first temple, the throne that Isaiah knew was 'a place of devouring fire ... the burning mass of eternity', where the righteous would 'see the king in his beauty' (Isa.33.14, 17, my translation);[138] the earliest part of *1 Enoch* describes the holy of holies as 'the second house ... built of flames of fire ... Flaming fire was round about him and a great fire stood before him';[139] Daniel saw a throne of flames over streams of fire (Dan.7.9-10);[140] and Ezekiel described fire around and within the throne, in which he saw moving shapes. Those who knew the first temple, and those who remembered what it had been like, remembered the fiery cube that had been the holy of holies.

Not only did Pythagoras teach that there was a unitary fiery cube at the heart of creation; he also said that it was at the centre of the four elements. Now the temple veil was said to represent the four elements. The earliest references to this symbolism are at the end of the second temple period: Philo and Josephus, both men of the high priestly family, agreed that the four colours represented the four elements.[141] There is no earlier evidence, but there is no earlier explanation of any of the tabernacle and temple furnishings. These were the secrets of the high priesthood, and the fact that the [late] sources of information were both from the high priestly family strengthens the case for the information being accurate. Thus Pythagoras's fiery cube beyond the four elements also points to the holy of holies. Anatolius, writing in Alexandria in the third century CE, said Pythagoras taught: 'At the centre of the four elements there lies a certain unitary fiery cube ...' He also taught that this fiery centre was the number One, the present moment, reality/essence, the source of truth, the single unity, the pattern, the order, the harmony, the mid-term between greater and lesser, upper and lower, the measure of many, a ship, a chariot, love, life and good fortune.[142] All these images point to the fiery cube of Day One, which was outside time and so symbolised the eternal present. It was the unity beyond the diversity of the visible world and it was the source of life. In the fiery cube was the chariot throne, which *must* have been the source of the Pythagorean symbolism that One was the chariot. Some scholars have also pointed out the similarity

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[138] See above, p.107.
[139] *1 Enoch* 14.15, 22.
[140] This section is an expansion of Psalm 2, a first temple text, see A. Bentzen, *King and Messiah*, ET London: Lutterworth, 1955: 'an eschatoligized representation of the ancient Enthronement Festival', p.75.
[141] Philo, *Questions on Exodus* II.85; Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.7.7; *War* 5.212-13.
[142] Iamblichus, *Theologoumena Arithmeticae*, ed. V. de Falco, Leipzig: Teubner, 1922, I.6-7.

between the descriptions of Noah's ark and the tabernacle, and so there may have been boat symbolism associated with the temple which is otherwise lost.[143] This level of correspondence between Pythagoras's fiery cube at the centre and the ancient lore of the holy of holies cannot be coincidence. It can only have come from knowledge of the secret teaching of the high priests about matters within the veil.

In Pythagorean tradition, the fiery cube had several names. It was known as Zeus' watch tower, *phulakē*, Zeus' defence tower, *purgos*, and Zeus' throne. A fragment of Aristotle's work *On the Pythagoreans*, quoted by Simplicius, says: 'The more genuine members of the school regard fire at the centre of the universe as the creative force which gives life to the whole earth and warms its cold parts. Some call it *Zenos purgos, Dios phulakē*, and *Dios thronos*.'[144] A fiery cube as the source of life and the place of the divine throne was holy of holies lore, but so too are the names *phulakē* and *purgos*, which in the LXX translate the Hebrew words for tower: *māṣôr* and *migdāl* respectively. The holy of holies was often described as a tower, because it looked like a tower when viewed from the valley below. Josephus knew that the eastern part of Solomon's temple, the holy of holies, had been built on land created by infilling behind a great retaining wall built up some 300 cubits from the valley floor.[145] Enoch called it a tower raised high above the earth, and from it he saw the vision of his people's history. Enemies burnt the tower and demolished the house, and the returning exiles rebuilt the high tower.[146] For Isaiah it was the tower in the vineyard (Isa.5.2, *migdāl*, LXX *purgos*), and for Habakkuk it was tower place where he waited to receive a vision (Hab.2.1, *māṣôr*, LXX *phulakē*).[147] Classical scholars note that this idea of the centre of the universe as a watch post or defence tower is particularly striking; '... usually in Greek the idea of the gods "watching over" the world of mortals is associated with a view from high up in the heavens, not from the centre of the universe'.[148] Looking out from the centre, however, is exactly the earlier biblical view: the LORD enthroned looks, *nbt*, from heaven and looks forth, *šgh*, on the inhabitants of the earth (Ps.33.13-14). Looking *down* is not in this text, despite some English translations. In Deuteronomy, however, the LORD does look down, *šqp*, because for the D writer, the LORD did not dwell in the temple, but high in heaven above (1 Kgs 8.27, 30).

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143 'There are striking parallels between the tabernacle and the ark of Noah', T. E. Fretheim, '"Because the Whole Earth is Mine": Theme and Narrative in Exodus', Interpretation 50.3 (1996), pp.229–239, p.238.

144 Simplicius, *On the Heavens* 511.26, cited in Huffman, op.cit. n.114 above, p.235.

145 Josephus, *War* 5.185. The filled in land, the Millo, 1 Kgs 9.15.

146 *1 Enoch* 87.3; 89.66, 73.

147 Thus too *Ass. Mos.* 2.4 'the tower of his sanctuary', and *T.Sukkah* 3.15, attributed to R. Yosi, early second century CE: 'He built a tower in the midst of his vineyard ... This is his sanctuary.'

148 Kingsley, op.cit., n.137, p.269.

One of the extracts in Stobaeus's's[149] collection lists some of Philolaus's names for the centre of the universe that must go back to the earliest Pythagorean tradition, if not to Pythagoras himself. Aristotle also said that Philolaus called the central fire 'the hearth'[150] which suggests that this part of Stobaeus's account is accurate. 'Philolaus [says] there is a fire in the middle around the centre which he calls the hearth of the universe and the house of Zeus and mother of the gods, and altar and that which hold things together, and measure/proportion of nature.'[151] Almost a thousand years after the destruction of the temple and the expulsion of the Lady, the ancient names for both herself and her sanctuary are here. Isaiah described the city and the Lady as Lioness of El and the hearth,[152] she was the mother of the angels,[153] she held all things together in harmony (Lxx Prov.8.30), and Ezekiel knew her as the measure or proportion of all creation.[154]

Plato described the centre of the earth as the home of Zeus and the gods, and here too, it is the biblical image: God sat in judgement among the gods (Ps.82.1); 'ten thousand times ten thousand stood before [the throne]' (Dan.7.10); John saw the throne and heard the sound of many angels numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands' (Rev.5.11). Plato wrote: '[Zeus] assembled together all the gods into their most honoured dwelling, which stands in the centre of the universe and sees all things that are part of the creation that comes into being; and having assembled them, he spoke ...'[155] Here *Critias* breaks off, and the words of Zeus are lost, but what Plato described was the world view of the psalmist:

> The LORD is in his holy temple,
> the LORD's throne is in heaven;
> his eyes behold ... the children of men. (Ps.11.4)

and of the Second Isaiah, whom the LORD asked:

> Have you not known? Have you not heard?
> Has it not been told you from the beginning?
> Have you not understood from the foundation of the earth?
> It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
> And those who dwell there are like grasshoppers ... (Isa.40.21-22, my translation)

[149] Stobaeus lived in Macedonia in the late fifth century CE, and compiled an anthology that drew extensively on the work of Aetius which does not otherwise survive.
[150] See below, p.279.
[151] Stobaeus, *Eclogae* 22.1.
[152] See above, p.158 on Isa.29.
[153] See below, p.290.
[154] See above, p.214.
[155] Plato, *Critias* 121C, my translation.

In his vision, Isaiah was standing in the holy of holies – 'the beginning', the state where he had observed the foundation of the world – and he was reminded of the LORD's view of the world. Kingsley again: 'To call the Pythagorean central fire the throne or home of Zeus is incomprehensible from the standpoint of Greek mythology.'[156] But it was fundamental to temple lore.

Then there was the mysterious and invisible 'counter-earth', *antichthōn*, next to the central fire, which Aristotle said the Pythagoreans had invented 'not seeking accounts and explanations in conformity with appearances, but trying by violence to bring the appearances into line with accounts and opinions of their own'.[157] Nobody knows exactly what was meant by the counter-earth. The word could have meant the 'image of the earth', much as an antitype was formed by the impression of the type; but the sense seems to be that it was an 'opposite earth', something between the fire at the centre and the earth itself. It was also invisible. 'Philolaus the Pythagorean says that fire is in the middle (for this is the hearth of all), and that the counter-earth is second, and the inhabited earth is third, and lies opposite to and moves around with the counter-earth. Accordingly, those on the counter-earth cannot be seen by those on the earth.'[158] Aristotle himself thought it was a tenth heavenly body which they needed to invent to perfect their system based on 10: 'Since the number 10 is considered to be perfect and to comprise the whole nature of numbers, they also assert that the bodies which revolve in the heavens are 10; and there being only 9 that are visible, they make the counter-earth the tenth.'[159]

The counter-earth, is likely to have been one of the mythological elements that Pythagoras took from the first temple, which his later disciples tried to incorporate into a 'scientific' account of the world, and Aristotle was correct when he said that this was an opinion they brought to their observations, rather than derived from them. If the counter-earth did come from temple lore, then it was not a heavenly body, but rather one aspect of the invisible world, a 'heaven'. An equivalent to the counter-earth in temple tradition was the belief in exact opposites being very similar, and since the fallen angels worked through deception, this was their domain. The age of this belief is not known, but it is clear in, for example, *2 Enoch,* where the highest heaven, the seventh, was the fiery place of the great throne, the sixth heaven was the place of the seven identical archangels who maintained the harmony of creation, and immediately below them, in the fifth heaven, was the place of the fallen angels who rebelled against the Holy One and brought evil to

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[156] Kingsley, op.cit., n.137, p.195.

[157] Aristotle, *On the Heavens* 2.13, 293a18ff.

[158] Aetius 3.11.3. Nn.46, 47, 48 are from Huffman, op.cit., n.114 above, pp.231–8. See also J. Manfeld and D. T. Runia, *Aetiana,* Leiden: Brill, 1997, vol.2.1, p.114.

[159] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 986a2.

the earth.[160] Thus the place of the fallen angels was between the fiery throne and the material world. This is the most likely origin of the *antichthōn* which Pythagoras said was immediately next to the fire at the centre of the universe, and which has perplexed his commentators ever since.

The similar-opposites that characterised this state could be pairs of words, or pairs of symbols, or even pairs of stories, and these antitypes existed in, and came from, the fifth heaven. In the Book of Revelation, Satan, described as the deceiver, was thrown *down from heaven* (Rev.12.9). The wordplay characteristic of temple texts used similar sounding words to emphasise contrast, Isaiah's pairing of justice and bloodshed, *mšpṭ* and *mśpḥ*, righteousness and a cry of despair, *ṣdqh* and *ṣʿqh*, being the best known examples, but he gave a double message throughout the parable of the vineyard (Isa.5.1-7), showing how the anointed king had been corrupted and the temple worship would be destroyed. The LORD planted his choice vine, *śorēq*, a word found only here and in Jeremiah 2.21. The vine was an image for the king: 'this vine,[161] this stock which your right hand has planted, the son whom you have established for yourself' (Ps.80.14b-15, translating the Hebrew literally). He expected it to bear grapes, *ʿ*^{a}*nābîm*, but it bore wild grapes, *b*^{e}*'ušîm*, a word that elsewhere means foul smells. An unusual word like this suggests wordplay, and so 'good grape', *ʿ*^{a}*nāb*, was perhaps intended to evoke the similar sounding word *hēnîp*, the verb which meant waving an offering before the LORD or spreading perfume (Lev.23.11; Prov.7.17). Spreading perfume was the role of the anointed one – Isaiah 11.3 means literally 'His perfume shall be the fear of the LORD.' As punishment, the place would become a waste, neither pruned nor hoed (Isa.5.6). Now the root word for 'prune', *zmr*, also means 'make music to praise the LORD' and the root word for hoe, *ʿdr*, sounded very similar to *'dr*, a rare root meaning 'make glorious'. Instead of pruning/making music to the LORD and hoeing/making him glorious, there would be briers and thorns, which must have been a well-known expression (Isa.5.6; also 7.23, 24, 25; 9.18; 10.17). But these two also evoke other words: briers, *šāmîr*, sounds similar to Isaiah's word for a city watchman, *šomēr*, and looks exactly the same (Isa.21.11); and thorn bushes, *šayit*, is like the word for the pillars (thus Isa.19.10) or the foundations (thus Ps.11.3) of society. When Isaiah described the destruction of the Assyrian army, he said that the flame of the Holy One would burn the thorns and briers, that is, their leaders (Isa.10.17). In the parable of the vineyard there is the same wordplay; instead of the watchmen and leaders of the city going up, *ʿālāh*, [to the temple], briars and thorn bushes would grow up, also *ʿālāh*.

Then there were the pairs of images. Type and antitype [in the sense of opposites] are found in the the Qumran texts: Melchizedek, meaning king

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[160] 2 *Enoch* 18–21.

[161] A different word for vine, *gepen*.

of righteousness, and Melchiresa‘, meaning king of evil; the children of light and the children of darkness; and a dark lady, clothed in the shadows of twilight and ornamented with corruption, whose ways lead to death and sin,[162] who must be the antitype of the Lady. The pattern is very clear in the Book of Revelation and shows just how sophisticated a system this was. Taking as an example a part of the description of the red dragon and the beast from the sea, there are:

- The red dragon and his agent, the beast from the sea as antitypes of the Lord and the Messiah, who rose up, ritually, from the sea, 'a Man from the heart of the sea' (2 Esd.13.25), and, by implication, the Man in Daniel 7.
- The beast from the sea who had the power, the throne and the authority of the red dragon (Rev.13.2), as did the Messiah who had the power, the throne and the authority of the Lord (Rev.5.12-14).
- The beast from the sea who had many crowns and a blasphemous name on its heads (Rev.13.1) as did the Messiah who had many crowns and a secret name inscribed (Rev.19.12).
- The Lamb who was resurrected even though he had been slain (Rev.5.6); and the beast who had recovered from a mortal wound (Rev.13.3).

The ten horns and seven heads of the beast from the sea should most likely be understood as ten horns on each of the seven heads of the beast, making seventy horns in all. Since a horn was a symbol for a ruler, the beast from the sea was the source, the 'father' of the seventy [evil] rulers who were the antitypes of the seventy sons of God. These seventy evil forces were all related to each other and emanated from the one source: the beast. Thus there was a unity of evil, just as there was a unity of good, where all the angels were a part of the One. There are many examples, all of which show that this was a highly sophisticated expression of a complex theology.[163]

The Numbers of Creation

The Pythagoreans lived by their master's philosophy, a religious society who observed rules of physical purity and also of intellectual discipline. For them the latter meant 'purification of the soul by *theoria*, the contemplation of the divine order in the world'; and this *theoria* 'was the intellectual contemplation of the universal order, whereby the microcosm comes to

[162] 4Q184.1
[163] See my book *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000, pp.226–41.

reproduce (*mimeisthai*) that order more perfectly, and becomes *kosmios*, attuned to the celestial harmony'. Harmony was fitting together all the parts into a complex whole.[164] In other words, it was a religious discipline for them to contemplate the order of creation which they described as God bringing order and harmonious motion. The *Timaeus* described the creation thus: 'When God took over all that was visible, seeing that it was not at rest but in a state of inharmonious and disorderly motion, he brought it into order from disorder, considering this to be in every way better.' 'Before [the creation was organised], all these things were without proportion, *alogōs*, or measure, *ametrōs*, but when the ordering of the universe was begun, and [the elements] were in every way as everything is likely to be when God is not there, this being their natural state, he first gave them definite shapes with patterns and numbers.'[165] Pythagoras, said Burkert, was the first to connect mathematics and philosophy.[166] Others described this as the bond between religion and science: 'Religion and science were not, to Pythagoras, two separate departments, between which there was no contact, but rather two inseparable factors in a single way of life.'[167]

It would have been more accurate to say that Pythagoras was the first *in the Greek tradition* to link mathematics and philosophy, religion and science, because the oldest strata of the Hebrew tradition show exactly this link. The Hebrew texts cannot be dated with any certainty, but few would hold that the relevant material originated after the time of Pythagoras. Job is unlikely to be using post-exilic and so post-Pythagorean imagery, and it shows clearly the role of number and measurement in the older, pre-Genesis, Hebrew creation story. When Job was questioning the justice of God, the debate was set within this older creation story. Zophar asked Job if he knew the height, depth, length or breadth of God (Job 11.7-9). 'Job' knew that the quest for Wisdom meant studying the measurements and laws of creation:

> God, *'elohîm*, knows the way to her [Wisdom],
> and he knows her place.
> For he looks upon the ends of the earth,
> and sees everything under the heavens.
> To make a weight for wind,
> and measure waters with a measure,
> Making an engraved statute for the rain,

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[164] Cornford, op.cit., n.116, pp.139, 143.
[165] *Timaeus* 30A, 53AB, my translation.
[166] W. Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, tr. E. L. Minar, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1972, p.413.
[167] G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957 p.228.

and a path for the lightning of the thunder ... (Job 28.23-26, my
translation)[168]

So too in the LORD's answer to Job from the whirlwind:[169] who determined the measurements of the foundation of the earth, who imposed order and limits on the material creation, who prescribed the movements of the stars and numbered the clouds? (Job 38.4, 31, 32, 37; also Job 9.4-10).

The Second Isaiah, a contemporary of Pythagoras, asked similar questions about the measurement of creation:

Who measured the waters in the hollow of his hand
and marked off the heavens with a span,
enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure
and weighed the mountains in scales
and the hills in a balance?
Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD,
or as his counsellor has instructed him?
Whom did he consult for his enlightenment,
and who taught him the path of justice,
and taught him knowledge,
and showed him the way of understanding? (Isa.40.12-14)

The LORD replied that Isaiah had known all these things 'from the beginning' that is, from his experience in the holy of holies. He had known this from seeing 'the foundations of the earth', and so he would also have seen the whole span of history. He already knew who 'brings princes to naught' (Isa.40.21-22). This sequence ends with a call to observe the stars:

Lift up your eyes on high and see:
Who created these?
He who brings out their host by number,
Calling them all by name ... (Isa.40.26)[170]

Note that the LORD calls them by number and by name, which is exactly what Enoch observed. When he was standing in the holy of holies.[171]

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[168] Note that the engraved statute is here is parallel with 'the path'. The two must have had similar meanings, and 'path' may not be an appropriate translation in this context. 'Law' might be a better translation.

[169] The LORD speaks to Job here and in 40.6 from the whirlwind, *s'rh*, such as Ezekiel saw when the chariot approached, Ezek.1.4: RSV 'stormy wind'.

[170] So too Psalm 147, although this may be a later second temple composition.

[171] *1 Enoch* 43.1-2.

There is nothing about these measurements in Genesis 1, although the process of creation is one of dividing and separating, bringing order. The absence of measurements is probably because such knowledge was the lore of the holy of holies, the secret things that did not concern people who were guided by Deuteronomy (Deut.29.29). They were still forbidden at the end of the second temple period: 'Whoever sets his mind to four things, it were better for him if he had not come into the world – what is above? what is beneath? what was before time? and what will be hereafter?'[172] What is above and what was before time concerned the holy of holies. Nevertheless, the older Hebrew system does appear in some second temple texts, and they confirm that this 'scientific' knowledge of the creation was still remembered as the lore of the holy of holies, and maybe texts existed which are now lost. In other words, the link which Pythagoras made between religion and science was part of the older temple belief that he could have encountered during his time in Syria.

'Baruch', writing a few years after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, went to the ruins of the temple. There he received a vision, showing that the temple was still remembered as the place of visions.[173] Then he went to Hebron where he received another vision which an angel explained to him. On Sinai, said the angel, Moses had received far more than just the ten commandments. Now the summit of Sinai, as we have seen, corresponded to the holy of holies, and in second temple texts Moses on Sinai took over the role of the king in the holy of holies.[174] The additional scientific knowledge that Moses received on Sinai must have been part of the ancient lore of the holy of holies, and *it concerned the measurements of the creation.*

> He showed him many warnings together with the ways of the Law ... and then further, the likeness of Zion with its measurements ... But he also showed him at that time the measures of fire, the depths of the abyss, the weight of the winds, the number of the raindrops, the suppression of wrath, the abundance of long suffering, the truth of judgement, the root of wisdom, the richness of understanding, the fountain of knowledge, the height of the air ... the multitude of the angels which cannot be counted, the powers of the flame, the splendour of lighnings, the voice of the thunders, the order of the archangels, the treasuries of the light ...[175]

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[172] Mishnah *Hagigah* 2.1.
[173] *2 Baruch* 34.1–35.1.
[174] See above, pp.32, 49.
[175] *2 Baruch* 59.4-12.

Later, 'Baruch' prayed:

> Only you know the length of the generations,
> And you do not reveal your secrets to many.
> You make known the multitude of the fire
> And you weigh the lightness of the wind.
> You investigate the end of the heights
> And you scrutinise the depths of darkness.[176]

The secret measurements revealed to Moses were also revealed to Enoch. On his heavenly journeys, he saw:

> 'a deep abyss with columns of heavenly fire ... which were beyond measure alike towards the height and towards the depth'. '... a horrible thing: a great fire there which burned and blazed, and the place was cleft as far as the abyss, being full of great descending columns of fire; neither its extent nor its magnitude could I see, nor could I conjecture'.[177]

When Enoch stood before the throne, the angel of peace showed him everything that was hidden:

> And after that I saw all the secrets of the heavens, and how the kingdom is divided, and how the actions of men are weighed in the balance ... And there mine eyes saw the secrets of the lightning and the thunder, and the secrets of the winds, how they are divided to blow over the earth, and the secrets of the clouds and dew ... and the closed chambers out of which the winds are divided, the chamber of the hail and winds, the chamber of the mist, and the cloud thereof hovers over the earth from the beginning of the world ... and the chambers of the sun and moon ...[178]

These were 'all of the spirits who minister before him' that Moses saw on Sinai, according to *Jubilees*:

> The angels of the spirit of fire,
> the angels of the spirit of the winds,
> the angels of the spirit of the clouds and darkness and snow and hail
> and frost
> the angels of resounding and thunder and lightning,

[176] *2 Baruch* 48.3-5.
[177] *1 Enoch* 18.11; 21.7.
[178] *1 Enoch* 41.3-5.

> the angels of the spirit of cold and heat, and winter and springtime and harvest and summer, and all of the spirits of his creatures which are in heaven and earth.[179]

Later in Enoch's visions in the holy of holies, the secrets were described as the *names* and the *measurements*:

> And I saw other lightnings and the stars of heaven, and I saw how he called them all by their names and they hearkened unto him. And I saw how they are weighed in a righteous balance according to their proportions of light; the width of their spaces and the day of their appearing ...[180]

A similar list appears later, but with more emphasis on the measurements:

> And the other angel who went with me and showed me what was hidden told me what is first and last in the heaven in the height, and beneath the earth in the depth, and at the ends of the heaven and at the foundation of heaven. And the chambers of the winds, and how the winds are divided and the portals of the winds are reckoned, each according to the power of the wind, and the power of the lights of the moon, according to the power that is fitting; and the divisions of the stars according to their names, and how all the divisions are divided.[181]

This was the sevenfold, that is the complete, knowledge of the creation to be revealed [restored?] to the righteous at the end of the second temple period, the 'seventh week'.[182]

The measurements of the creation were an important part of the original temple tradition, revealed to seers in their visions. They survived for centuries in the enigmatic *merkāvāh* texts and yet can be detected in the very oldest temple texts. In a vision attributed to R. Akiba, who lived in the early second century CE, he ascended and stood before the throne, and as he prepared to go down again to the sons of Adam, the LORD said to him: '"Akiba, go down and teach the mysteries to the creatures." And R. Akiba went down and taught this mystery to the creatures.'[183] 'Mystery' here is *middāh*, literally 'measurement'. Those who compiled this *merkavah* material [at a much later date than the lifetime of R. Akiba] could attribute this teaching to a rabbi of the early second century CE. Eight centuries earlier, in some of

[179] *Jubilees* 2.2.
[180] *1 Enoch* 43.1-2.
[181] *1 Enoch* 60.11-12.
[182] *1 Enoch* 93.10-14.
[183] *Merkavah Rabbah* # 686, in P. Sch fer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, T bingen: Mohr, 1981.

the oldest material in *1 Enoch*, there is an account of his heavenly journeys. He described Jerusalem before the construction of Hezekiah's tunnel during the lifetime of Isaiah, that is, before 700 BCE (2 Kgs 20.20).[184] On his first journey, angels showed him 'the store chambers of all the winds, and how he used these winds to arrange the whole creation ... And I saw the four winds which support the earth and the vault of the skies ... I saw too the winds that rotate the skies, bringing the orb of the sun and all the stars to their setting.'[185] On his second journey, Uriel showed him 'the stars of heaven and their gates, *their number and their names* [cf. Isa.40.26], their courses and their positions, and their times and their months'.[186] The third section of *1 Enoch*, known as the *Astronomy Book*[187] records the detail of what Uriel revealed, and this is the outstanding example of the measures and proportions of creation. There must, surely, have been texts giving details of the other secrets of creation that 'Baruch' summarised in his account of Moses on Sinai.

Since the calendar revealed by Uriel was primarily a solar calendar like that used before Josiah's purges, there is a strong possibility that the material in the *Astronomy Book* is ancient. The paths of the heavenly bodies, their point of rising and the proportions of their light are set out in detail, e.g: 'Then the sun moves to the fifth gate in the east for 30 days, rising there and setting in the fifth gate. The daytime grows longer, until it is 11 units and the night is 7 units.'[188] The only system of reference is segments of the horizon, 'the gates'. The sun moves on a chariot driven by a wind; so too the moon whose light, when full, is one seventh that of the sun; and the weathers, controlled by winds, emerge through gates guarded by winds.[189] Those who altered the calendar were allies of the rebel angels, and with the sinners' deviant system, the seasons arrived at the wrong time and the moon was out of phase: 'And many chiefs of the stars shall transgress the order, and appear to alter their orbits and tasks, and not appear at the seasons prescribed for them.'[190] Pythagoras linked science and religion, but so did Enoch. Those who knew what 'Enoch' knew could have influenced the young Pythagoras.

There are enigmatic references in Isaiah that could reflect this Enochic system, adding to the possibility that the knowledge in the *Astronomy Book* was known in the first temple period: 'The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold ...' (Isa.30.26): and 'He/it [the glory?] will come like a rushing stream, which the wind of

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[184] *1 Enoch* 26.2-4 describes the Gihon spring before Hezekiah's tunnel was constructed to divert the water into the city.
[185] *1 Enoch* 18.1, 2, 4, tr. D. Olsen, *Enoch*, North Richland Hills: Bibal Press, 2004.
[186] *1 Enoch* 33–36.
[187] *1 Enoch* 72–82.
[188] *1 Enoch* 72.11-12.
[189] *1 Enoch* 72.5; 73.2-3; 76.1-14.
[190] *1 Enoch* 80.6.

the LORD drives' (Isa.59.19, my translation). Now if the winds were in fact spirits, and thus the angels of Psalm 104.4 – '[The LORD] makes his angels spirits/winds' – the Enochic system would be describing the heavenly bodies moved by their angels rather than just blown by the winds. This is how John understood the system: four angels at the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds (Rev.7.1). In addition, Charles reconstructed from the Ethiopic text of the *Astronomy Book* the names for aspects of the sun and for three of the phases of the moon. He found they were Hebrew and not Aramaic: 'Of the above Semitic words, the two for the sun, *ḥeres* and *hammāh*, are Hebrew and not Aramaic, while of the four names for the moon, *'îšôn*, *l^ebānāh* and *ben keseh* are Hebrew only.'[191] In other words, since the technical terms for the phases of sun and moon were Hebrew words, this could indicate a first temple origin.

Neugebauer, discussing the *Astronomy Book*, observed: 'We are dealing with an extremely primitive level of astronomy, which shows no relation to the sophisticated Babylonian astronomy of the Seleucid period, nor to its Hellenistic Greek sequel.' This was not necessarily proof of great age, he cautioned; it could have been due to 'the isolation of the Enochic astronomers'.[192] Isaiah, as we have seen, could have been an astronomer,[193] and some of the items removed from the first temple could have been astronomers' instruments. This is not proof, but the extraordinary accuracy of the temple measurements in the Qumran *Temple Scroll* is proof of sophisticated astronomy practised in the Jerusalem temple. The measurements given in the *Temple Scroll* show that the eastern gates of the temple courts were aligned to mark sunrise at the solstices and the equinoxes, even allowing for the false horizon of the Mount of Olives. This was not a theoretical depiction of an ideal temple; it was planned and calculated for a particular site.[194] Now despite the picture given in the Old Testament, the Greeks thought of the Jews as philosophers who talked about God and studied the stars[195] and Timaeus, the Pythagorean, was an astronomer.

Knowledge of the heavenly measurements served to establish the correct order on earth. The heavenly measurements functioned in some way as a blueprint for the correct ordering of both creation and human society. When the hand of the LORD brought Ezekiel in a vision to Jerusalem, he saw there an angel with a line of flax and a measuring reed, who told him to watch and listen carefully and then teach everything to the house of Israel (Ezek.40.1-4). A tour of the visionary temple followed, with the angel measuring everything and Ezekiel noting the numbers and the details of the

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[191] R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912, p.167n.
[192] O. Neugebauer, 'Notes on Ethiopic Astronomy', Orientalia 33 (1964), pp.49–71, p.58.
[193] See also p.101–2 above on Isa.7.14.
[194] See my article 'The Temple Measurements and the Solar Calendar', in *Temple Scroll Studies*, ed. G. J. Brooke, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989, pp.63–6.
[195] Theophrastus, *De Pietate*, in Porphyry, *De Abstinentia* II.26.

construction. Finally, the angel brought Ezekiel to the eastern gate, and he saw the glory return to the temple just as he had seen it leave (Ezek.43.1-5). Then Ezekiel received his final commission from the angel:

> And you, son of Adam, describe to the house of Israel the temple,
> that they may be ashamed of their iniquities, (literally distortions)
> and measure the plan. [So that] they may be ashamed of all they have done, teach them the form, *ṣûrāh*, of the house and its measurement/ proportion, *toknît*,[196] its exits and entrances and all its forms and its engravings and its forms [and all its laws, but this is not in the LXX], and write them before their eyes that they may observe all the forms and engravings and do them. (Ezek.43.10-11, my literal translation)

Now these 'engravings' might be the ordinances of the temple, the heavenly laws, but the 'forms' and 'proportions' are not. Ezekiel saw the measurements of the heavenly ideal that had to be replicated on earth, not just as the temple building, but as the correctly ordered creation and society that the temple represented. After many more detailed measurements, the angel concluded not with an exhortation to a correctly built temple, *but with an exhortation to a just society and fair trading oractices:*

> Thus says the Lord GOD: Enough, O princes of Israel! Put away violence and oppression, and execute justice and righteousness; cease your evictions of my people, says the Lord GOD. You shall have balances of righteousness and an *ephah* of righteousness, and a *bath* of righteousness. (Ezek. 45.9-10, my literal translation)

The heavenly measurements determined the trading standards on earth. This is very like the instruction to R. Akiba, to teach the mysteries/measurements to his people.

There is something similar in Job, 'similar' because the key word is not known elsewhere, and that in itself is significant. The LORD asked Job: 'Do you know the engravings of the heavens? Can you set their *arrangement* on earth?' (Job 38.33, my literal translation). The word *mištār* seems to come from the verb whose original meaning was 'arrange, organise', and so the gist of the question was 'Can you use the engravings to organise the earth?' This looks very like the *Timaeus*. As Proclus said of Pythagoras's contribution to geometry: '[He] changed the study of geometry, giving it the form of a liberal discipline, seeking its first priniciples in ultimate ideas, and investigating its theorems abstractly and in a purely intellectual way. *It was he who discovered the subject of proportions and the contruction of cosmic figures*.'[197]

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[196] Reading with BDB, op.cit., ch.4 n.2, p.1067.
[197] Proclus, *Commentary on Euclid's Elements*, 1.

The Forms

The third element of Pythagorean teaching that appears in the *Timaeus* and also in Ezekiel is the theory of Forms or Ideas, *ideai*. These are the invisible 'essences' of everything in the visible world, not just of material objects but also of qualities and values. Plato's Forms were outside time and matter, and they were the purest of all things. Philo gives the important information that *the Forms were the same as the invisible powers of God, the angels*, and these powers were collectively the glory of God in creation. 'Some among you call them, not inaptly, Forms, *ideai*, since they bring form into everything that is ...'[198] Philo's link is important for tracing the origin of the Forms to the holy of holies, and for understanding what was enclosed within the glory that Ezekiel saw. Gnostic material with temple motifs shows that the Forms were associated with the chariot throne. The Gnostics were also heirs to temple tradition, and their evidence for the nature of the Lady is important, as we shall see.[199] The enigmatic text known as *On the Origin of the World*, for example, has Sabaoth make for himself a great throne on which are Forms, from which the angels receive their identity as distinct beings. 'All the Forms total 72. For from this chariot the 72 gods receive a pattern; and they receive a pattern so that they might rule over the 72 languages of the nations.'[200] This is recognisable as the origin of the 70 sons of God who were allocated the nations of the world as their heritage, the LORD receiving Jacob.[201] Here they originate as Forms on the throne; the sons of God emerge, so to speak, from the throne, which was a symbol of the Lady. She was their Mother.

Later Jewish tradition also knew that the Forms were engraved on the throne and came from it. When Enoch, in his heavenly state as Metatron, welcomed R. Ishmael to heaven to learn the mysteries, he first showed R. Ishmael the angels round the throne, who were the first stage of creation. Then, as the angels sang the Sanctus, the holy names engraved on the throne flew off and became the heavenly host. They filled the creation with the glory, just as Isaiah had learned when he saw the throne and heard the Sanctus (Isa.6.3). This was the process by which the angels emerged into the creation. R. Ishmael saw the 'letters engraved with a pen of flame on the throne of glory, the letters by which heaven and earth were created.[202] There would have been an intermediate stage: the names on the throne became the host, and the host then shaped the visible creation. The *Sepher Yeşira* [Book of Formation] described the process thus: 'The twenty-two letters: God carved them and shaped them, weighed them and changed them round and round

[198] Philo, *Special Laws* I.45, 48, see above, p.255.
[199] See below, pp.305–27.
[200] *On the Origin of the World*, Coptic Gnostic Library II.5.105.
[201] Deut.32.8, in Lxx and 4Q Deut[j].
[202] Summarising *3 Enoch* 38–41.

and combined them and then created with them all that has been created and all that will be created.'[203] Now in Hebrew [and in Greek] letters and numbers are the same symbols, and so the letters/angels of creation were the same as the numbers of creation. This explains the 'Pythagorean' language of Forms and numbers used by the Second Isaiah in the sixth century BCE.

> To whom then will you *compare me*,*
> that I should be like him?
> says the Holy One.
> Lift up your eyes on high and see
> Who created these?
> He who brings out their host *by number*,
> Calling them all *by name* ... (Isa.40.25)
>
> *the verb from *d^{e}mut*, Form.

For centuries, the angels were known as Forms, as Idel has shown. Esoteric Jewish teachings such as the *Sepher ha Bahir*, [Book of Brightness], whose written form is known only from the late twelfth century CE, have extraordinary similarities to material found at Nag Hamadi: the *Letter of Eugnostos,* the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* and *On the Origin of the World.* The *Wisdom* is a Christian version of *Eugnostos*, and the earlier text is thought to date from the first century BCE. The temple roots of *Eugnostos* are clear, although it cannot really be called 'Jewish'. Someone using temple material, who 'lived' in the world of Ezekiel's visions, produced a text that Christians adopted and attributed to Jesus. Presumably some early Christians recognised the importance of this material for the Church. 'Eugnostos' wrote of the First Father and the sons of the unbegotten Father, the light revealed as an immortal androgynous figure whose names were Son of Man and Sophia, and the procession of 72 angels/powers contained within each other and compared to units of time. The material in the *Sepher ha Bahir* is attributed to R. Neḥunya, who was teaching around 100 CE, and the similarities of this book to the material from Nag Hamadi suggest that he could indeed have known these ideas. Another book in the same tradition, written in early twelfth century Spain, was the *Kitab-al Kuzari*, and this also knew that angels were Forms. The eternal angels are '"lasting spiritual forms" and are identical with "the glory of God which is the wholeness of the angels and the spiritual vessels; the seat [of glory], the chariot and firmament, the Ophanim and the wheels, and everything which is lasting"'. Idel continued by showing how the term Sabaoth [Zevaot] was used in the *Sepher ha Bahir*

[203] *Sepher Yeşira* 2.2 is traditionally ascribed to Abraham. This text is thought to be the oldest deposit of Jewish esoteric/mystical lore, and has been dated anywhere between the second century BCE and the fourth century CE.

to 'refer to a complex of forms of powers'.[204] All this has its roots in the 'Forms' in Ezekiel's vision of the chariot throne, and, strange though these suggestions may be to some contemporary biblical scholarship on Ezekiel, this is *how the text was understood by people who lived within the same cultural tradition*. It is possible that they knew what Ezekiel meant about the Forms and their appearances.

In Plato's *Republic* 'the Forms are thought but they are not seen', and Philo had the LORD say: 'The powers are discerned not by sight but by mind, even as I, whose they are, am discerned by mind and not by sight ...'[205] In Plato's *Phaedrus* we read: '[The gods] when they reach the top, pass outside and take their place on the outer surface of heaven ... and they behold the things outside of heaven ... For the colourless, formless and intangible truly existing essence, with which all true knowledge is concerned, holds this region and is visible only to the mind, the pilot of the soul ...'[206] The *Timaeus* adds more information about the supreme Form: 'This being the case, it must be agreed that there is one Form like this, that does not come into being and is not destroyed, not receiving into itself anything from outside, nor itself passing into anything else. Invisible and in every way *beyond sense perception*, it is for understanding to consider carefully.'[207]

These Forms, existing beyond the material world, are what the Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* described as the *ṣûrôt*, *dᵉmût* and *tabnît* in the holy of holies. The texts are very fragmented, and even in the little that can be recovered, it is impossible to work out the distinction between the various words. The *Songs* show they are all aspects of the state represented by the holy of holies. Of these words, only *ṣûrôt*, has a plural form: 'spirits of knowledge, truth and righteousness in the holy of holies, forms, *ṣûrôt*, of living *'ᵉlohîm* ... light giving images, *ṣury*, of spirits ... forms of *'ᵉlohîm* engraved ... forms of glory ... forms ... angels of holiness'.[208] The *ṣûrôt* of the *'ᵉlohîm* were 'engraved' in the holy of holies. One of the *Thanksgiving Hymns* declared 'All things are graven before thee'.[209] The wise teacher at Qumran knew that 'God's ordinance is engraved', and this was linked to the glory of eternity and the marvellous mysteries. It was the *raz nihyeh*, the mystery of becoming.[210] The engraved state was one way of describing the Forms, perhaps the Forms as they were becoming perceptible, the patterns and principles of creation that existed in the non-material state and shaped the visible world.

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[204] M. Idel, *Kabbalah. New Perspectives*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988, pp.122–7.
[205] *Republic* 507; Philo, *Special Laws* I.46, see above, p.255.
[206] Plato, *Phaedrus* 247C.
[207] *Timaeus* 52A, my translation.
[208] 4Q 405 19 ABCD, 4-6.
[209] 1QH IX.
[210] 4Q418 fr. 43.

The LORD was the greatest Form, *ṣûr*. The plural form of the word appears in later texts but the singular appears throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. It is translated 'Rock' – another meaning for these letters – and so is not recogised for what it is. In almost all cases, the LXX has no equivalent word for 'rock', suggesting that these letters were read as something else. The context suggests it meant 'Form'. Most examples are Psalms or from Isaiah, or from an ancient poem, that is, they are from older temple-related texts. The *Song of Moses* has the word five times, and in each case the LXX has simply God, *theos* (Deut.32.4, 15, 18, 30, 31). In the last words of David, the word is translated 'guardian', *phulax* (2 Sam.23.3). There is no 'rock' in Psalms 19.14; 28.1; 73.26 [where *ṣûr* is translated 'strength'] 78.35; 89.26; 92.15; 95.1; nor in Isaiah 17.10; 30.29; 44.8. Substituting 'invisible power/ Form' for 'Rock' makes perfect sense in all these examples. 'The Rock of ages' (Isa.26.4), which is 'Great eternal God' in the LXX, could originally have been 'The invisible Power in eternity'.

There are many examples of invisible engravings in eternity/the holy of holies in the Hebrew Scriptures. Ezekiel's contemporary Jeremiah knew of the 'engraving' that marked the limit of the sea, the 'engraved' weeks of the calendar, the engravings of the moon and the stars, the engravings of heaven and earth (Jer.5.22, 24; 31.35; 33.25).[211] Wisdom, the Lady, said she was with the LORD before the visible world was made. The engraving, the Form, was how the Creator shaped the material world. 'When he prepared the heavens, I was there, when he engraved a circle on the face of the deep ... When he set down for the sea its engraved mark ... When he engraved the foundations of the earth (Prov.8.27-29, my translation). Together, these 'engravings' were the bonds of the eternal covenant, and when they were transgressed, the system collapsed. Thus Isaiah saw the earth withering away because 'they have transgressed the laws, violated the engraved things, broken the everlasting covenant (Isa.25.5, my literal translation). *Timaeus* described a similar process: the component parts of creation and its forces existed in disorder, 'without proportion or measure ... in the disorganised state to be expected of anything which god has not touched, and his first step when he set about reducing them to order was to give them a definite pattern and shape and number'.[212]

Later Jewish and Christian texts described the forms as 'drawn in outline', shapes without solidity. Clement of Alexandria quoted Theodotus, a teacher later described as Gnostic, who said that 'the Son was drawn in outline in the beginning'.[213] The 'beginning', as in Isaiah 40.21, means the holy of holies, and for Theodotus, the Son existed there as a Form. When the Son became visible, he was described using Ezekiel's word, *mar'eh*, appearance,

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[211] See above, pp.168, 289.
[212] *Timaeus* 53B.
[213] Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpts from Theodotus* 19.

but after the Deuteronomists' ban on images and the vision of God, this became the Aramaic word Memra, usually understood as 'the Word'. Philo, however, knew that the 'Word' was *seen as an image* on Sinai. Those who sought knowledge desired most to see *to on*, God Most High, he wrote, 'but those who did not achieve this could see his image, *eikōn*, the most holy Word, and after Word, its most perfect work ... even this world'.[214] The early Christians used this language, but their temple heritage makes it unlikely that they drew it from Platonism. The early hymns quoted by Paul, but much confused in translation both into Greek and then into English, have Jesus in the form of God taking the form of a servant and being born in the likeness of men (Phil.2.6-7); and Jesus as the image, *eikōn*, of the invisible God (Col.1.15).

Clearest is the *Gospel of Philip*, which links the types and forms of creation to the glory and the holy of holies. The contrast here is between the visible things of the created world, where the strong are highly esteemed and the weak are despised, and the truth:

> Contrast the manifest things of truth: they are weak and despised, while the hidden things [of truth] are strong and held in high regard. The mysteries of truth are revealed, though in type and image. The bridal chamber, though, remains hidden. It is the holy in the holy. The veil at first concealed how God controlled the creation ...
>
> If some belong to the order of the priesthood, they will be able to go within the veil with the high priest...
>
> [The veil] was rent from top to bottom ... in order that we may go in to the secret of the truth ... but we shall go there by means of lowly types and forms of weakness. They are lowly indeed when compared to the perfect glory. There is glory which surpasses glory. There is power which surpasses power. Therefore the perfect things have opened to us, together with the hidden things of truth. The holies of the holies were revealed, and the bridal chamber invited us in.[215]

It could be argued that the *Gospel of Philip* and Philo were influenced by Platonism, but *Philip*'s saying that the holy of holies was the state of the types and forms, and that they were hidden by the veil, links directly to Ezekiel's visions. It may be that the Greek language is all that Philo had in common with Plato.

The *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, set in the holy of holies, use Ezekiel's word *tabnit* found in the lament for the fallen cherub (Ezek.28.12): 'the chiefs of the *tabnît* of *'elohîm* praise ...'; 'the *'elohîm* of the *tabnît* of the chariot throne blessing above the firmament of the cherubim ...'; 'every *tabnît* of the

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[214] Philo, *Tongues* 97.
[215] *Gospel of Philip* CG II.3.84-85.

spirits of wonder ...'; 'the *tabnît* of the breastplates'.[216] The *Songs* also use Ezekiel's word *d^{e}mût*, 'a marvellous *d^{e}mût* of a spirit of holy of holies'; then the individual word in an unreadable patch a few lines later; then a '*d^{e}mût* of a spirit of glory like a work of fine gold making light ...'.[217] The meaning of *d^{e}mût*, which is Ezekiel's principal word in the visions, has to be deduced from other examples in the Hebrew Scriptures: a noise *like* a great people (Isa.13.4, my translation), so the comparison does not have to be visual. The word can indicate a simple comparison, 'venom *like* the venom of a snake' (Ps.58.4, my translation); it can be an element in a building specification for a bronze altar, and here the words *d^{e}mût* and *tabnît* are distinguished: 'King Ahaz sent to Uriah the priest a *d^{e}mût* of the altar and its *tabnît*' (2 Kgs 16.10), perhaps the concept of an altar and its plan. Second Isaiah, in his attack on idols, used both the noun *d^{e}mût* and the related verb to ask: 'To whom then will you *liken* God, or what *likeness* compare with him?' (Isa.40.18, also 40.25); 'To whom will you *liken me* and make me equal, and compare me that we may *be alike*?' (Isa.46.5). *This means that the question of the divine d^{e}mût was a live issue when Pythagoras was living in Syria.*

Ezekiel seems to have used the language of Forms and appearances when recounting his visions; 'seems' because the LXX does not use Plato's terms to translate Ezekiel's words. His use of words, nevertheless, is careful and consistent, suggesting that he was using technical terms, the language of the priesthood. Most English versions do not translate Ezekiel's words consistently, and so the pattern is not obvious; the AV is the exception, rendering *d^{e}mût* as 'likeness' (LXX has *homoiōma*, whereas Plato has *idea*) and *mar'eh* as 'appearance' (LXX has *horasis*). These two terms appear in pairs in Ezekiel's accounts and represent the invisible reality, Plato's Form, and then the way Ezekiel saw that Form in his vision. Translating *d^{e}mut* as 'Form' shows the similarity to Plato's usage. In Genesis there is another term in the priestly sequence: 'Let us make man as our *ṣelem*, according to our *d^{e}mût*' (Gen.1.26, my translation). Adam was made as the 'image' *ṣelem*, a word from the root meaning to cut out. This could have been the carved image, the 'outline', and that is certainly how Jacob of Serug [died 521 CE] understood the word. Explaining the hidden meaning of Ezekiel's chariot – that it prefigured the incarnation and that the throne was an image of Mary – he wrote: 'Before creation, the Father had drawn the image, *tsalma*, of his Son ...'[218] The Adam of Genesis 1, then, was still a heavenly being, and not yet in the material world.

This sequence of *d^{e}mût*, *mar'eh*, *ṣelem* represents three levels by which the divine makes itself known before entering the material state. It was the *raz*

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[216] 4Q403 1 ii.16; 4Q405.20.ii 21-22.8; 11QŠŠ 5/6.2, 8/7.5.

[217] 4Q405.14-15 i.2, 7; 4Q405 23.ii.9.

[218] Jacob of Serug, *On the Chariot that Ezekiel the Prophet Saw*, 598: 15, cited in A. Golitsin, 'The Image and Glory of God in Jacob of Serug's Homily "On the Chariot that Ezekiel the Prophet Saw"', St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly, 47.3/4 (2003), pp.323–64.

nihyeh, the mystery of becoming, that the wise at Qumran sought to know. A much later development of this pattern within the same tradition is found in the Kabbalah, where the various levels or states of the Torah are revealed. 'The later Kabbalists spoke of four worlds which constitute such a spiritual hierarchy, the world of divine emanation, *'atsiluth*; the world of creation, *ber'iah*; the world of formation, *yetsirah*; and the world of activation, *'asiyah*. These worlds are not successive but exist simultaneously and form the different stages by which the creative power of God materialises.'[219] The Kabbalists spoke of the Torah being revealed in this way, but Ezekiel lived before the full impact of Josiah and the Moses-Torah tradition had been felt, which means that he was thinking and seeing in terms of whatever preceded Torah.[220] This had been Wisdom, the Lady. Ezekiel's visions prompted him to describe the process of Wisdom manifesting herself, the stages by which the mystic approached the divine and saw it/her unfold to him. This could also be described as a mystical ascent, with Ezekiel seeing first the wheel and the Living One on the earth, then the firmament overhead, above that the throne, and on the throne a human form (Ezek.1.15, 22, 26). The religious discipline of the Pythagoreans had been to contemplate the divine order in the world and the harmnony that fitted all the parts together into a whole. The Lady was described in the Lxx as 'the one who holds together in harmony' (Lxx Prov.8.30).

Ezekiel described his experience of the throne, with the confusing mixture of singular and plural, masculine and feminine forms, perhaps an androgyne. In the first of the visions, Ezekiel has the *d^emût* of the four Living One(s) [fem. pl.] and then their appearance: 'From the midst of [the fire] the Form of four Living One(s), and this was their appearance, they had a human Form' (Ezek.1.5, my translation); then 'And the Form of the Living One(s), their appearance was as burning coals of fire as the appearance of torches; she [the fire] was moving about within the Living One(s), and the fire was bright and from the fire lightning was coming forth' (Ezek.1.13, my translation); then 'The appearance of the wheels and their construction was like the gleam of a golden precious stone, and the Form of one [wheel] was [the same] for the four [Living One(s)] and the appearance [of the wheels] was like a wheel within a wheel' (Ezek.1.16, my translation). Then there is the Form and the appearance of the throne and the glory: 'Above the firmament ... the Form of a throne with the appearance of a sapphire stone, and upon the Form of the throne, a Form with the appearance of a human being, upon it and above it' (Ezek.1.26, my translation). Details of the appearance follow: 'And I saw like the gleam of *ḥašmal*, [like the

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219 G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, New York: Schoken Books, 1965, p.73.
220 The later Kabbalists still knew that the primordial Torah was Wisdom, see Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p.41.

appearance of fire in the midst of her round about][221] from the appearance of *his* loins and above; and from the appearance of his loins and below like the appearance of fire; and there was brightness around him' (Ezek.1.27, translating literally). Finally, Ezekiel described the appearance of the Form of the glory of the LORD. 'Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness round about, this was the appearance of the Form of the glory of the LORD, and I fell upon my face and I heard a voice speaking ...' (Ezek.1.28).

Ezekiel's description of the chariot/holy of holies is very like that in Enoch's first heavenly journey, when angels took him up to a mountain that reached to heaven, and where he saw the places of the stars and weathers. This section of *1 Enoch* is thought to be some of the earliest material in the collection. There are variants in the texts, but the gist is: 'And they [the angels] took me and brought me to a place where there were beings like flaming fire, and when they wished, they had the appearance of men. And they brought me to a place of whirlwind, to a mountain whose summit reached heaven. And I saw the places of light and thunder ...'[222] Enoch then saw the powers of the invisible creation: the winds, the stars and the paths of the angels. He was standing in the invisible creation that was represented by the holy of holies. He knew that it was a place of whirling at the top of a mountain, and that figures like men emerged from the fire. In other words, Enoch saw what Ezekiel saw, but Ezekiel saw it leaving the temple.

In the second vision, Ezekiel again saw the Form whose appearance was the fiery man. 'And I saw, and behold a Form like the appearance of fire, and from the appearance of his loins and above there was fire, and from his loins and below there was like the appearance of gold, the gleam of *ḥašmal*' (Ezek.8.2). Then the figure put forth the shape, *tabnît*, of a hand and lifted Ezekiel up for his spirit-journey to Jerusalem. There he saw the throne again, 'a Form of a throne, like the appearance of sapphire stone' (Ezek.10.1), and the four wheels whose appearance was like a golden precious stone, and who were each the appearance of the same Form, a wheel in the midst of a wheel (Ezek.10.9-10).

Given the corresponding use of the fiery cube, the measurements of creation and the Forms, the Living Creature of Plato's *Timaeus* must have been the Living One of Ezekiel's vision, as a simple comparison shows. 'This cosmos came into being as a Living Creature, *zoon*, with a soul and a mind ... In the likeness, *homoiotēs*, of which of the Living Creatures did the Constructor construct it?'[223] Genesis shows that language of Form, *d^emût*, and physical copy was used to describe the creation: Adam was created 'as our image, according to our Form, *d^emût*' (Gen.1.26). *Timaeus* described the

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[221] This is not in the LXX.
[222] *1 Enoch* 17.1-3.
[223] *Timaeus* 30BC.

whole creation as the copy of a Living Creature. Further, declared Timaeus, the Living Creature had to be the one of which all the other living creatures were a part. 'That Living Creature contains within itself all the living creatures that can be conceived, *noēta zoa*, just as the cosmos holds together us and the other visible creatures.'[224] 'The mind perceives Forms that exist within the Living Creature, and such kinds and so many as exist within it, he considered it necessary for this world to have.'[225] In other words, there must have been one Living Creature that was the pattern, *paradeigma*, for the living system that is the visible cosmos. Now we have seen that Ezekiel's Living One was filled with points of light that represented *kol bāśār*, all flesh, defined in Genesis 6.17 as 'all flesh in which is the Spirit of Life', and that *Jubilees* has a possible explanation of the points of light. When Moses saw Day One, he saw the various angels created in that state, and also 'all of the spirits of his creatures which are in both earth and heaven'.[226] This information is not included in Genesis 1 because that text was for public reading, and the secrets of the holy of holies were known only to the high priests. The account of Day One and Ezekiel's chapter of the chariot, however, were both restricted texts, presumably because both dealt with the secret matters of the holy of holies. The chapter of the chariot could not be read in public, and neither the account of Day One in Genesis nor the chariot could be explained to a student unless s/he already understood their meaning.[227] The points of light that Ezekiel saw in the chariot were most likely the spirits of all creatures within the 'Living One', in their pre-material state, insofar as the chariot and Day One both represented this state.

The Living Creature in the *Timaeus* was created spherical, and in the midst of it was set Soul, which extended through the whole of the Living Creature.[228] This is like the fire which Ezekiel saw moving about within the Living One(s) (Ezek.1.13), which the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* described as a fiery substance full of spirits.

> [The holy angels] go out from within the whirling of glory, and like the appeance of fire the spirits of the holy of holies round about, the appearance of streams of fire, the Form of *ḥašmal*. And there is a shining substance with many colours of glory and wonder, purely blended, the spirits of living *'ᵉlohîm*, moving about constantly with the glory of the wonderful chariot(s).[229]

[224] *Timaeus* 30C.
[225] *Timaeus* 39E.
[226] *Jubilees* 2.2.
[227] Mishnah *Megillah* 4.10; *Hagigah* 2.1.
[228] *Timaeus* 34B.
[229] 4Q405 20-21-22. 9-11, my literal translation.

Timaeus continued: '*As a circle turning within a circle*, he established a single solitary heaven.'[230] Ezekiel described a Living Creature, singular, whose Spirit was in the midst of the wheels, and those wheels were described as 'a wheel within a wheel' (Ezek.1.16, 20, 21; 10.17). The similarity is remarkable.

Then Timaeus described the process of constructing the circles, which were formed from two strips joined with the shape of a X, and revolving in contrary directions. Justin Martyr, who had studied philosophy before he became a Christian in the early second century CE, knew that this X was a symbol of the Son of God. In the first temple, the sign of the Name of LORD, the Son of God Most High, had been the *tau*, which at that time was a X. This is what Ezekiel marked on the foreheads of the faithful (Ezek.9.4). The *Prayer of Manasseh* 3 shows that this Name was the seal of the creation, in other words, that the system was secured by a X. Justin criticised Plato for misunderstanding this in the *Timaeus*: 'Which things Plato reading, and not accurately understanding, and not apprehending that it was the figure of the cross, he took it to be a placing crosswise ...'[231] *Justin, and presumably other Christians too, assumed that Plato took his ideas from the Old Testament*, but had not properly understood them. *Timaeus* then describes how one of the two bonds was split to make the orbits of the sun, moon and five planets known at that time: 'When they had been brought into being as living creatures, bound with living, *empsuchos*, bonds, they learned what had been appointed for them.'[232] The equivalent of this in Ezekiel's vision was the 'rims' of the wheels full of points of light, although there are so many difficult words in this verse that the meaning is not certain (Ezek.10.12).

The heavenly bodies bound in their courses is exactly the picture of the eternal covenant found in *1 Enoch*, where there are the remains of a poem about cosmic order:

And they are strong through his oath ...
And through that oath the sun and moon complete their course,
And deviate not from their ordinances from eternity to eternity
And through that oath the stars complete their course,
And he calls them by their names,
And they answer him from eternity to eternity ...
And this oath is mighty over them,
And through it they are preserved and their paths are preserved,
And their course is not destroyed.[233]

[230] *Timaeus* 34A.
[231] Justin, *Apology* 1.60.
[232] *Timaeus* 38E.
[233] *1 Enoch* 69.20, 21, 25.

The age of this poem is not known, but it is consistent with Second Isaiah's picture of the creation, and the ritual of the oath shows it was sworn with the Name of the LORD, the X.
Then, said Timaeus, the whole range of living creatures was created to correspond to the Forms perceived in the Living Creature. There were four types: one, the heavenly race of gods, then the winged ones who go through the air, third, the ones in water and fourth those who go on foot on dry land. These corresponded to the four elements: beings of fire, air, water and earth. God himself created the first group, the creatures of fire who were the stars. Each of them had two movements: rotation and going forward – *exactly the movement of the Living Creature that Ezekiel described*.[234] These beings were called the children of God. The book of Job, in which there are glimpses of the pre-Genesis creation myth, describes how the morning stars and all the sons of God sang as the material world was shaped (Job 38.7). Timaeus's children of God had to create the three other classes of beings, so that the copy of the Living Creature would be complete.[235] Genesis, the public text, describes the creation of only three of these classes by *ʾelohîm*, a plural form; the creatures of air, water and land. Psalm 104 also has the first class, the beings of flame and fire who were the creatures of Day One.

Philo explained the two creation stories in Genesis as being the creation of the Forms and then the creation of the material world.

> What is the meaning of the words, 'And God made every green thing of the field before it came into being on the earth and every grass before it grew'? In these words he alludes to the incorporeal ideas [the Forms]. For the expression 'before it came into being' points to the perfection of every green thing and grass, of plants and trees. And as Scripture says that before they grew on the earth he made plants and grass and the other things, it is evident that he made incorporeal and intelligible ideas [Forms] in accordance with the intelligible nature which these sense-perceptible things on earth were meant to imitate.[236]
>
> Is he not manifestly describing [in Gen.2.4-5] the incorporeal ideas [Forms] present only to the mind, by which, as by seals, the finished objects that meet our senses were moulded.[237]

Philo was no innovator here. The words of Exodus show that Moses had to make the tabernacle according to the *tabnît* which he had seen when he was in the cloud on Sinai (Exod.25.9, 40), and the traditional understanding of Moses' vision was that he saw the days of creation, the heavenly pattern that

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[234] *Timaeus* 40B.
[235] *Timaeus* 41AB, 42D.
[236] Philo, *Questions on Genesis* I.2.
[237] Philo, *Creation* 129.

was created on earth.[238] The tabernacle was built according to the heavenly pattern.[239] Thus Philo, from the high priestly family, was explaining Genesis 2.5 in the way that the priestly writer of Exodus explained the origin of the plan for the tabernacle, and Exodus was written at least a century before Plato expounded his theory of Forms.

The description of the six days concluded: 'Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them' (Gen.2.1). Who or what was the host of heaven? If they were the angels, and the angels 'were' the Forms, this would be consistent with Philo's view that the world of Forms was created before the visible world. The Lxx translated *ṣ*^e^*bā'ôt*, hosts, as *kosmos*, a word with many meanings in later Greek, but for Pythagoras it meant 'order in the creation'. Tradition, which tended to glorify Pythagoras, said of him: 'Pythagoras first named that which surrounds the whole "*cosmos*" on account of the order in it.'[240] The Lxx was saying that after the six days, the heaven and the earth were completed and all their order, presumably their Forms, and so translated the 'hosts' as the *cosmos*. Now Philolaus said: 'the *cosmos* in one', and of this, Huffman notes: 'He is asserting that the world is a unity'.[241] If Pythagoras had said that the *cosmos* was a unity, this is very similar to the fundamental statement: 'The Lord our *'elohîm* is One.'[242]

The *Tetraktys*

One of the characteristics of the Pythagoreans was the *tetraktys*, which they described as the fount and source of eternal nature. It must have been their symbol for the Living Creature. Their oath was in the name of Pythagoras, who had given them the *tetraktys,* and so Burkert described it as 'the kernel of Pythagorean wisdom'.[243] It was celebrated as the means to the number ten, the perfect number:

> Ten is the very nature of number ... And again, Pythagoras maintains, the power of the number ten lies in the number four, the tetrad ... And so the Pythagoreans used to invoke the tetrad as their most binding

[238] See above, p.205. Thus too Josephus, *Ant.*3.6.4: 'The proportion of the measures of the tabernacle proved to be an imitation of the system of the world.'
[239] And later the temple, cf. 1 Chron.28.18-19, the Lord's plan, *tbnyt*, for the temple given to Solomon.
[240] Huffman, op.cit., n.114, p.98, citing Aetius 2.1.1.
[241] Ibid., pp.215, 219.
[242] Rabbinic tradition remembered the heavenly Forms as the meaning of Job 38.31, 33: 'Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? ... Do you know the engraved things of heaven? Can you establish their *mštr* on earth?' Every plant on earth, said R. Simon, had a corresponding constellation to make it grow. Thus the constellation of Pleiades binds the fruit into one shape in the winter, and Orion draws it out into fullness in the summer. *Genesis Rabbah* X.6.
[243] Burkert, op.cit., n.166, p.72.

> oath: 'By him [Pythagoras] that gave our generation the *tetraktys*, which has the fount of eternal nature and the root.'[244]

Since the Pythagoreans did not make their teachings public, the meaning of the *tetraktys* has to be reconstructed from a variety of sources, some of them hostile.

The *tetraktys* was represented by ten points arranged as an equilateral triangle 1, 2, 3, 4, such that counting from any vertex, the sequence was the same. This arrangement of 1, 2, 3, 4 was the pattern from which the musical ratios could be read from any vertex. 'There seems no reason to doubt the tradition that Pythagoras himself discovered ... that the chief musical intervals are expressible in simple numerical ratios between the first four integers ... octave, 2:1, fifth, 3:2, fourth, 4:3.'[245] The *tetraktys*, then, was associated with harmony and it was described as the harmony in which were the Sirens.[246] In the Hebrew tradition, holding in harmony was one of the roles of Wisdom as she worked beside the Creator, marking out the Forms (Prov.8.22-31), and the Lxx translated the enigmatic *'āmôn* in v.30 as *harmozousa,* 'the woman who holds things together in harmony'. Visions of the throne, with the exception of Daniel 7, always involved heavenly music.

The same arrangement of ten points also symbolised the emergence of the material world from the invisible world of the Forms: 1 was the point, 2 the line, 3 the plane surface and 4 the solid. In other words, it was the 4 that enabled the solidity of the material world that we are able to see. Philo first described the role of 4 in music and then, in his account of the creation, he explained at length how the 4 enabled the material, visible creation.

> There is also another power of 4 which is most marvellous to speak of or to think about. It is the first [number] that showed the nature of the solid, the numbers before it referring to incorporeal things. Under 1 is set, what is called in geometry the point; under 2 the line, and since one flows out and is two, so a line flows from a point. A line is a length without breadth. When breadth is added, it becomes a surface, which comes under 3. To bring a surface to a solid needs one thing, depth, which added to 3 becomes 4. Hence the great importance of this number, which has led us from the incorporeal world in the mind to the conception of a three dimensional body which by nature is the first thing we perceive.[247]

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[244] Aetius 1.3.8, cited in Kirk and Raven, op.cit., n.167, p.231.
[245] Kirk and Raven, op.cit., n.167, p.230.
[246] Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras*, cited in Burkert, op.cit., n.166, p.170.
[247] Philo, *Creation* 49, my translation.

He added further insights about the nature of 4:

> Four was the beginning of the creation of the whole heaven and earth; for the 4 elements from which the universe was formed, flowed, as from a fountain, from the 4 among numbers, and in addition the regular seasons are 4, which are the cause of animals and plants growing.[248]

He knew that the 4 was 'the origin, *archē*, and source, *pēgē*,'[249] that it was called 'all' because it potentially includes the numbers up to ten and ten itself.[250]

Philo referred many times to the number symbolism usually identified as Pythagorean. In particular, he returned frequently to the theme of the 4 and the 10, yet never once mentioned the *tetraktys*. Commenting on Philo's use of number symbolism in his *On the Creation* 47–52, Runia noted: 'Implicit here is the Pythagoran *tetraktys*, the most celebrated doctrine of Pythagoreanism ... Surprisingly, *Philo never refers to it by name*.'[251] Then, on Philo's description of 4 and the formation of the solid, he said: 'It is noteworthy that the very phraseology of Philo's presentation of this feature is closely shared by a number of other sources ... Philo is working within a common tradition of which *he is the oldest and, in this case, the most detailed witness*.'[252] Again, commenting on the paucity of scientific material in his *Creation*, Runia noted: 'This bias undoubtedly reflects the preferences and limitations of Philo's own education.'[253] But all this could be explained if Philo had been drawing on his own temple tradition – he was of the high priestly family. There is a widespread assumption that what resembles Plato must have been drawn from Plato, which ignores the universal ancient witness that Plato drew from Moses. This material could have come to Philo by a different path. So too, Runia, writing of the 'bonds of creation', made the usual assumption:

> We conclude, therefore, that neither the middle Platonist use of *Tim*.41a-b, nor the Stoic doctrine of cosmic cohesion, can fully explain Philo's frequent use of the image of the *desmos* [bond] in relation to the Logos and the Powers of God. So it is difficult to determine whether we are dealing with a personal predeliction (at least partly resulting from his reading of *Timaeus*), or with one of the many gaps in our knowledge of Philo's reading material.[254]

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[248] Philo, *Creation* 52.
[249] Philo, *Special Laws* II.40.
[250] Philo, *On Planting* 123.
[251] D. T. Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses*, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001, p.191, my emphases.
[252] Ibid., p.193, my emphases.
[253] Ibid., p.35.
[254] D. T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato*, Leiden: Brill, 1986, p.240.

If Philo drew on a temple tradition of symbolism, which resembled Platonism because Pythagoras was influenced by first temple teaching, he could have had in mind Ezekiel's fourfold Living One with its points of light when he wrote:

> The number 4 is the most harmonious with all numbers, as it is the most perfect. And it is the root, *riza*, and base, *themelion*, of the most perfect decad ... And as it is perfect in itself, it is filled with perfected beings.[255]

He saw significance in the fourth day of creation:

> The Heaven in its turn was regulated with the perfect number, 4, which one would not be wrong to call the resource and source of the perfect 10, for what the ten is in reality, the 4, it would seem, is potentially.[256]

He saw the 4 and the 10 in the structure of the tabernacle, which was built to replicate the creation Moses had seen in his vision on Sinai. The 4 was the four coloured threads – red, blue, purple and white – that represented the four elements[257] – from which were woven the 10 outer curtains that formed the tabernacle, the whole creation: '... so they have the all-perfect ten and four, the essence, *ousia*, of ten.[258] Philo did not invent these numbers in the description of the tabernacle, but they fitted perfectly his 'Pythagorean' argument.

Nor did he need to draw the imagery of the fountain from a Greek source. In the Pythagorean oath, the 4 was the fount, *pagan*, of eternal nature and the root, which in Philo became the origin, *archē*, and the spring, *pēgē* [another form of the older *pagan*]; and the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 flowed out to form the solid, and the elements and seasons also flowed out from the 4. The spring was a temple symbol for the Lady. She flowed from her temple (Ben Sira 24.30-33) and when the true temple was restored, both Ezekiel and John knew that her water of life would flow again from the temple (Ezek.47.1-12; Rev.22.1). Philo described Divine Wisdom as a spring, watering knowledge in its various forms and as many vision-loving souls as are possessed by a desire for the best.[259] The number 4 does not naturally lend itself to the image of flowing; the 4 was itself a symbol alongside another, that of the water of life flowing from the throne, which was itself the source of life and a symbol of the Lady. Mary is still depicted with her fountain of water in the ancient ikon type of the Life-giving Spring, *Zōodochos Pēgē*.

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[255] Philo, *Questions on Genesis* III.12.
[256] Philo, *Creation* 47.
[257] Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.7.7; Philo, *Questions on Exodus* II.85.
[258] Philo, *Moses* II.84.
[259] Philo, *Flight* 195.

The number 10, formed from the 4, was also represented in creation lore: although there were six days of creation in Genesis 1, there were 10 stages: light, darkness, firmament, dry land, vegetation, the lights of heaven, fish, birds, animals, and humans. Apart from the 10 curtains of the tabernacle that represented the creation, there were also the 10 words of God by which the world was created: 'And God said ...';[260] and when the tree of life – one of the symbols of the Lady – was later stylised, it demonstrated the 10 *sephirôt*.

The enigmatic 'Living Creature' of Plato's *Timaeus*, attributed to a Pythagorean teacher, was his version of Ezekiel's Living One. The similarities between the teaching of Pythagoras and the teaching of the first temple are too great for coincidence, and an otherwise inexplicable fourfold 'Living Creature' in both systems must mean that the one derived from the other. The relative dates of Ezekiel and Pythagoras put beyond doubt that Pythagorean teaching has preserved information about the Lady and her role in the older creation story.

Barbelo

Since there are these links between Pythagoras, Plato and the teachings of the first temple, it is necessary to revisit the question of Gnosticism and its origins, because a key figure in the Gnostic systems was a female divine being named Barbelo. There have been several suggestions for the meaning of the name, for example that it was invented from the Egyptian word for emission, to describe Barbelo's relationship to the first divine principle.[261] Since Epiphanius' hostile account of the Nicolaitans said that they deceived the simple by rendering Hebrew words and names into obscure Greek which is 'still clear to those who read Hebrew', Barbelo is more likely to have been a Hebrew name meaning 'fourfold deity', *b*^{e}*'arba' '*^{e}*loah,* and thus another name for Ezekiel's fourfold Living One.[262] The Gnostics, he also said, were closely linked to the Nicolaitans, and some called them Borborites, from the Greek word *borboros* meaning filth or sewer.[263] Recent suggestions for the origin of the name Barbelo include that it was a misreading of the Greek *parthenos*, Virgin, since Epiphanius used an intermediate form *barthenōs*.[264] Epiphanius himself, however, said that *barthenos* was the name for Noah's wife, whom the Gnostics said was the being they called Norea. He was mistaken, for it was in fact Noah's mother who had this name *bt'nwš*,

[260] Mishnah *Aboth* 5.1. The ten sayings are Gen.1.3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29, and 2.18.

[261] Thus B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, London: SCM, 1987, p.15.

[262] Epiphanius, *Panarion* 25.4.

[263] Epiphanius, *Panarion* 25.2; 26.3.

[264] *Panarion* 26.1, suggested by W. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, G ttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1907, p.14, cited by G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology*, Leiden, Brill, 1984, p.61, n.11.

Bitenosh/Betenos, which he transliterated as Barthenos.[265] If this name had been associated, for whatever reason, with Barbelo, the link would be significant, for Noah's mother was also the grandmother of Melchizedek and so the matriarch of the old priesthood.[266] Even hostile reports say that Barbelo was called 'the mother of all living'.[267] The accounts of Gnosticism by early 'mainstream' Christian writers, together with some of the texts found at Nag Hamadi which seem to be 'gnostic', may reveal more about the Lady of the first temple. As with the teachings of Pythagoras, so too here we need first to look at other aspects of the earliest 'Gnosticism' to see if it had any temple characteristics. If there are other grounds for linking 'Gnosticism' to the first temple, then the 'gnostic' evidence for Barbelo is likely to come from the same source.

There are many theories about the origin of Gnosticism, but until the finds at Nag Hamadi in 1945, the only accounts of it were from hostile Christian writers. Their hostility is remarkable for two reasons, and is a warning that any enquiry must be carefully nuanced: the early Church did have a place for *gnōsis*, knowledge, which they said was a gift from Jesus; and he had given them this secret teaching from the holy of holies, the world of the angels. This looks very like Gnosticism, and clearly the early Christians not only had a place for it, but said it had come from Jesus himself. The earliest Eucharistic prayer known outside the New Testament gives thanks over the broken bread for the 'Life and knowledge, *gnōsis*, made known to us through thy servant Jesus';[268] Clement, bishop of Rome at the end of the first century, praised the Corinthian Christians for their sound knowledge, and described Jesus as the high priest through whom they had tasted the eternal knowledge. He counted himself among those who had looked into the depths of sacred knowledge.[269] Clement of Alexandria, writing a century later, described Christian teaching as the '*gnōsi*s that has descended by transmission to few, having been imparted unwritten by the apostles'.[270] He was hostile to others [whom we now call the Gnostics] and implied that they used the same basic traditions but not in their true form, making 'a perverse use of the divine words ... they do not enter in as we enter in, through the tradition of the Lord by drawing aside the curtain'.[271] He said that Paul had preserved 'the prophetic and truly ancient secret from which the teachings that were good were derived by the Greeks', a now-familiar claim,[272] and a century earlier, Ignatius, bishop of Antioch had

[265] Respectively *Genesis Apocryphon* 1QapGen 2.8 and *Jubilees* 2.28.
[266] Implicit in the story of Noah's brother Nir and his son Melchizedek, 2 *Enoch* 71.
[267] Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 26.10.
[268] *Didache* 9 and similar in 10.
[269] 1 Clement 1, 36, 40.
[270] Clement, *Miscellanies* 6.7
[271] Ibid., 7.17.
[272] Ibid., 5.10.

claimed that 'To Jesus alone as our high priest were the secret things of God committed.'[273] Something very like the systems now labelled 'gnostic' must have been part of the original teaching given by Jesus, even though this is not recorded in the canonical gospels. The insuperable problem is: how much of what is currently identified as 'Gnosticism' is authentic early Christian teaching that was never committed to writing?

The critics in the early Christian era described contemporary Gnosticism in all its forms as a Christian heresy. Recent critics have tried to trace its origins and they have made several suggestions: it was the extreme Hellenisation of Christianity; an extreme form of Platonism; or a system for which Platonism provided the vocabulary and the framework rather than the fundamentals. Its origin has been sought in Iranian religion, or in the general syncretism with oriental cults that was popular in the Mediterranean world at the end of the second temple period.[274] Jewish elements are obvious, but not 'mainstream' Judaism. The Samaritans have been proposed, since Simon Magus is often mentioned as an early Gnostic (Acts 8.14-24).[275] Most have now accepted that it grew within or from 'Judaism', because it was hostile to the Creator God of the Hebrew Scriptures and his creation. The question has become: what prompted this new development and when? What political or social crisis within Judaism during the period 200 BCE–150 CE[276] prompted the growth of Gnosticism? The situation that led to the Maccabaean revolt? The ferment in Syria and Palestine during the first century CE? The turmoil after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE? The turmoil arising from the Bar Kokhba revolt in 132–135 CE? And where? Egypt? Palestine? Syria? There are some recurring themes in the suggestions: the origin of Gnosticism lies in some socio-economic crisis – even though the texts do not mention this, but it was a fashionable approach when the scholars were working The origin of Gnosticism was linked in some way to the Wisdom tradition, which the texts do mention; and the origin was much concerned with the interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Now the fate of the Wisdom tradition and the interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures are both matters we have encountered earlier in our search for the Lady. A broadly based account of gnostic origins might be that of Layton:

> The formulation of the Gnostic myth ultimately drew on Platonist interpretations of the myth of creation in Plato's *Timaeus*, as combined with the book of Genesis. Speculation of this kind ... was popular with

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[273] Ignatius, *To the Philadelphians* 9.

[274] A good survey in C. B. Smith, *No Longer Jews. The Search for Gnostic Origins*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004, pp.7–71.

[275] A good survey of this aspect in J. E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the* LORD, Tübingen: Mohr, 1985, pp.3–24.

[276] Most suggestions fall within this period.

> learned Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria at the time of Philo Judaeus (ca.30 B.C. – ca.A.D.45). Such speculation was also fashionable in pagan philosophical circles for the first and second centuries A.D., and beyond. Since the Gnostic myth seems to pre-suppose this speculative tradition, it *might* be as old as Philo Judaeus. Yet nothing proves it *must* be so old.[277]

This position is drawn from 'mainstream' early Christian estimates of the origin of Gnosticism, which are invariably hostile. Hippolytus, for example, part of the theological ferment in early third century Rome, utterly condemned Valentinus, a learned Egyptian who died in 160 CE and had been influential in the Roman Church. According to other enemies, he had expected to be chosen as bishop.[278] Hippolytus condemned him as a Gnostic, not least because he drew on the teachings of Pythagoras and Plato. He wrote:

> The heresy of Valentinus is certainly connected with the Pythagorean and Platonic theory.
>
> Pythagoras declared the originating principle of the universe to be the unbegotten Monad, and the generated Duad and the rest of the numbers. And he says that the Monad is the father of the Duad, and Duad is the mother of all things that are begotten – the begotten one being the mother of all the things that are begotten.
>
> The quaternion [the *tetraktys*], then ... is a source of everlasting nature having roots, and Sophia from whom the animal and material creation has derived its present condition ...
>
> Sophia is called Spirit ...
>
> Sophia is the mother of all living creatures. [The angels] that have their citizenship in Jerusalem which is above, which is in heaven, this Jerusalem is Sophia ...[279]

The 'heresy' of Valentinus as described by Hippolytus was drawn directly from the first temple theology we have reconstructed from other sources.

Tertullian, another hostile critic, conceded that Valentinus had been an eloquent genius, but denounced his followers, saying they had departed from the ways of their founder.[280] What Hippolytus knew, then, may not be a true picture of what Valentinus was actually teaching in mid-second century Rome, but what he wrote shows that Valentinus knew the fourfold Living One as Wisdom, that she was the mother of the angels and all life, and that

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[277] Op.cit., n.261 above, pp.7–8.

[278] Tertullian, *Against the Valentinians* 4.

[279] Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 6.16, 18, 29. He believed that the *Timaeus* was drawn from Egyptian teaching.

[280] Tertullian, *Against the Valentinians* 6.

she 'was' Jerusalem – all things that we have concluded from an examination of the Hebrew texts. According to Marcellus of Ancyra, Valentinus also spoke of the three divine hypostases: '[He] was the first to devise the idea of three hypostases, in a work entitled *On the Three Natures* ... Father, Son and Holy Spirit.'[281] This may have been Marcellus' own paraphrase of the teaching, since the *Trimorphic Protennoia* describes a Trinity of Father, Mother and Son.[282] Some of this text resembles the *Apocryphon of John*, which is thought to set out the teachings of 'Sethian' gosticism in its earliest Christian form.

A key area of dispute was the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures. This alone would point to Hebrew roots for Gnosticism and suggest that it was of pre-Christian origin. Why would the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures have been so important for 'Gnostics' if they had no claim to the Hebrew heritage? 'Mainstream' Christians warned against the gnostic use of Scripture: 'They abuse the Scriptures by endeavouring to support their systems from them.'[283] It would be a mistake, however, to be distracted by the bizarre angel forms in the Gnostic texts, and to assert that they *must* have been the result of syncretism with, say, Egyptian ideas. Much in the gnostic system concerns the world of the angels, their origin and their role in the creation. The Gnostic texts could have been revealing the hidden world of the holy of holies, the forbidden teachings about Day One. Since these teachings were not in the canonical texts, but were nevertheless known to exist, there is no means of knowing whether the angel world of the Gnostics resembled the angel-world of the temple, *but the possibility cannot be excluded*. Gnostic texts described the heavenly powers as fantastic animals, but then so did Ezekiel when he described winged beings with the feet of calves, and the faces of a lion, an ox, an eagle and a man (Ezek.1.5-14). Isaiah saw fiery winged snakes by the heavenly throne, but by domesticating the word *seraphim* to our own imaginations, their snake-like originals are forgotten (Isa.6.2). A Qumran text described the leader of the evil angels as dark, with multi-coloured garments, and 'his appearance and his face were like that of an adder ...'.[284] The leader of the fallen angels, described as the ancient serpent, was cast from heaven (Rev.12.9) and the same snake appeared in Eden. It is perfectly possible that the gnostic angels originated in the temple, albeit centuries before the precise form in which the Nag Hamadi texts depict them.

The Gnostics' own texts recognise that there were many ways of understanding the Hebrew Scriptures, and a relatively late text from the school of Valentinus, the *Tripartite Tractate*, explained how this came about.

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[281] Quoted in Marcellus of Ancyra, *On the Holy Church* 9.
[282] *Trimorphic Protennoia* CG XIII.1. 37.
[283] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I.3.
[284] *Testament of Amram*, 4Q544.

It was not because the prophets gave many different messages, but because there had been many different interpreters of the prophets. Note that in this extract *the Jews are held to be the heretics who altered the Scriptures* [and also, as we have seen, suppressed the world of the Lady and her angels]. This has been a recurring theme in our enquiry, especially among the 'other voices' who preserved the ways of the first temple.

> The visions and the words [of the just ones and the prophets] do not differ because of the multitude of those who have given them the vision and the word. Therefore those who have listened to what they have said concerning this do not reject any of it, but have accepted the scriptures in an altered way. By interpreting them they established many heresies which have existed to the present among the Jews. Some say that God is one, who made a proclamation in the ancient scriptures. Others say that he is many. Some say that God is simple and was a simple mind in nature. Others say that his activity is linked with the origin of good and evil. Still others say that he is the creator of that which has come into being. Still others say that it was by his angels that he created. The multitude of ideas of this sort, the multitudes of forms and the abundance of types of scripture, is what produced their teachers of the Law.[285]

Philo, who lived in Alexandria about 100 years before Valentinus left for Rome, knew this tradition. He knew about the angels in the creation, and he knew the Valentinian 'Trinity' of Father, Mother and Son. He said that the divine Logos, represented by the high priest [so this was temple tradition], was the child of God, the Father of all, 'and his mother Wisdom, through whom [fem.] the universe came into existence'.[286] He also gave to the Mother the title favoured by the Gnostics: 'And who is to be considered the daughter of God but Wisdom, who is *the first-born mother of all things* ...?'[287] Since it was to Egypt that the devotees of the Lady had fled after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, it looks as though knowledge of the Lady and her angels had survived there, and that this is what Valentinus knew. The refugees had fled not only from the Babylonians but also from the purges and changes in the time of Josiah. If they had taken with them an earlier version of what is now called 'Gnosticism' this would account for their drawing on the same myths as the canonical Hebrew Scriptures, but using them to tell another story. People who had suffered the loss of the Lady and the new understanding of monotheism, remembered the theological battles of that time. This possibility has not been considered in the quest for Gnostic origins.

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[285] *Tripartite Tractate*, CG I.5.112-113.
[286] Philo, *Flight* 109; cf. *Teaching of Silvanus* CG VII.4.91: 'Wisdom your Mother ...'.
[287] Philo, *Questions on Genesis* IV.97.

The greatest of the upheavals had been the expulsion of the Lady, and the declaration that there was only one God – that Yahweh, the God of Israel, was also El Elyon. The *Apocryphon of John*, insofar as it represents an earlier form of Gnosticism than that of Valentinus, shows how the Gnostics regarded the words of the Second Isaiah, the great exilic prophet of monotheism. He wrote:

> I am the first and I am the last;
> Besides me there is no god ...
> Is there a God besides me?
> There is no Rock; I know not any. (Isa.44.6, 8)
>
> I am the LORD and there is no other,
> Besides me there is no God ...
> I form light and I create darkness,
> I make weal and create woe,
> I am the LORD who do all these things. (Isa.45.5, 7)

Compare this with the *Apocryphon of John*:

> Yaldabaoth ... is impious in his madness which is in him. For he said 'I am God and there is no other God beside me' for he is ignorant of his strength and the place from which he had come ...
>
> And when he saw the creation which surrounds him, and the multitude of the angels around him which had come forth from him, he said to them, 'I am a jealous God and there is no other God beside me.' But by announcing this, he indicated to the angels who attended him that there exists another God, for if there was no other one, of whom would he be jealous?[288]

When the Deuteronomists declared that Yahweh and El were One, and suppressed the cult and the memory of the Lady and her angels, they set the foundations not only for later Judaism, but also for the way that the Hebrew Scriptures would be read by Jewish and eventually by Christian readers. But the original Church remembered the ways of the first temple and knew there had been Father and Son from the beginning. The LORD of the New Testament was the LORD who had appeared and spoken in the Old Testament, and Jesus had been the manifestation of the LORD.[289]

Many of the themes in the Second Isaiah seem to mark the rupture that resulted in 'Gnosticism'. He was building on the theology of the First Isaiah,

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[288] *Apocryphon of John*, CG II.1.11, 13.

[289] This is the theme of my book *The Great Angel. A Study of Israel's Second God*, London: SPCK, 1992.

developing it for the new situation when some of the exiles would return to Jerusalem and establish their new temple. The ancient *Apocalypse of Weeks* described these settlers as an apostate generation,[290] and if the Second Isaiah was their prophet, it should be possible to reconstruct from his words something of the system that was abandoned in favour of the new 'apostate' ways. First, the 'former things' had been superseded, and the *'ᵉlohîm*, gods/angels, were challenged to show their power and their very existence by predicting the future: 'Behold, you are nothing ...', he declared (Isa.41.21-24; also 42.8-9; 43.8-13; 44.6-8; 45.20-21; 46.8-10; 48.3-5). The former things were the ways of the original temple and its mythology, which had been both fulfilled and superseded. This would explain the many heavenly beings in the gnostic system.

Yahweh himself was redefined by the Second Isaiah, and this is a key passage. Having been introduced as the Holy One, the Creator of Israel and the King, he was then identified as the God of the Exodus who told his people to forget the former things. In other words, the titles from the ancient royal cult were here joined to the Exodus saga, and this was the point where the 'new' Yahweh was presented to his people.

> 'I am the LORD, your Holy One,
> The Creator of Israel, your King.'
> Thus says the LORD who makes a way in the sea
> A path in the mighty waters,
> Who brings forth chariot and horse,
> Army and warrior;
> They lie down, they cannot rise,
> They are extinguished, quenched like a wick:
> 'Remember not the former things,
> Nor consider the things of old.
> Behold I am doing a new thing;
> Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?' (Isa. 43.15-19)[291]

The process of creation was also described differently. In the older cult, Melchizedek had encountered El Elyon, the Creator, *qoneh*, of heaven and earth, and Ezekiel had known the Lady, his consort, as *haqqonāh*, the Creatrix (Ezek.8.3).[292] The title means literally 'begetter', Father/Mother. The Lady and her sons, the angels, were driven out in the same upheaval that fused El and Yahweh, and Yahweh assumed some of the ancient roles of El. He did not, however, become the father of the angels since the angels were no more, but he did become the only Creator. The ancient title

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[290] *1 Enoch* 93.9.
[291] See my book *The Older Testament*, London: SPCK, 1987, pp.165–7.
[292] Her title before the attention of the correcting scribes, see above, p.123.

'begetter, *qonēh*, of heaven and earth' became 'maker, *'ośēh*, of heaven and earth', as can be seen in the Second Isaiah, who expanded the original title. The creative act was no longer procreation, the process that appears in the Gnostic systems as emanation. It was 'making'.

> I am Yahweh, *maker* of all things,
> who stretched out the *heavens* alone,
> who spread out the *earth* ... (Isa.44.24, similarly 51.13)

There are five examples of 'Yahweh, Maker of heaven and earth', all in the later psalms, presumably the usage of the second temple (Pss.115.15; 121.2; 124.8; 134.3; 146.5-6). The idea of a procreator God with a consort and sons was abandoned by those who equated Yahweh and El. The destruction of the old angels left some aspects of theology adrift. The angels and the fallen angels had been the explanation of the origin of evil, and so a new explanation of evil was needed. In the new era of the Law of Moses, human disobedience became the explanation of evil and how the creation became corrupted. This accounts for the story in Genesis 2–3, which had a very different form in the Gnostic texts.

The Gnostics regarded as arrogant the LORD's claim to be the only God and Creator, as announced by the Second Isaiah, and they remembered and described in various ways how the Lady had left the temple. The post-exilic Yahweh was, for them, an alien God, an upstart, a natural reaction for first temple traditionalists when confronted with the Deuteronomists' style of monotheism. This would answer Quispel's famous question. 'It seems to me that the real issue is this: most Gnostics were against the Jewish God who created the world and gave the Law. Is it possible that this doctrine is of Jewish origin?'[293] If the Jews who returned from Babylon had changed the older ways, imposing their version of the Law of Moses and, following the Second Isaiah, declaring Yahweh to be the only Creator, then the most likely root for Gnosticism was in the first temple.

The position adopted by many modern scholars of Gnostic origins does not take into account how the original Christians read the Old Testament, recognising the distinction between God Most High [El Elyon] and the sons of God, the first of whom was the LORD, the God of Israel. Nor does this position take into account the purges and changes in the time of Josiah, nor the Lady of the temple, nor the extensive witness of ancient authors that Pythagoras and Plato drew on Hebrew sources, such that the 'blending' of *Timaeus* and Genesis may not have been a relatively late speculation. All these 'gnostic' features may be survivals from the original upheavals in the seventh century BCE, and the Pythagorean elements may be survivals of original temple lore.

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[293] G. Quispel, 'The Origin of the Gnostic Demiurge' in *Gnostic Studies I*, Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1974, p.213.

The earliest gnostic system was pre-Christian or at any rate non-Christian, because non-Christian texts are known. Nevertheless, 'Gnosticism' clearly had a natural affinity with Christianity because there were 'gnostic' Christian texts as soon as there were 'mainstream' Christian texts, bearing in mind that those labels were applied retrospectively. The oldest gnostic system, labelled 'Sethian', featured Wisdom as a female figure; a characteristic version of the early part of Genesis that differs from the one in the Jewish Scriptures; an initiation rite that resembled old temple ritual; and strong affinities with the Pythagorean and Platonic system.

We shall look later and in more detail at the Lady as she appears in the 'Gnostic' texts and at the various versions of the Genesis stories, but first we note the Gnostics' use of Pythagorean/Platonic number systems. The heretic Valentinus was condemned for using them, and this is also apparent in many texts where the formation of the heavenly powers and the ranks of angels were set out according to those systems. In the first volume of his *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus described various gnostic systems in which the creation story was told in terms of the tetrad and the decad: the first four aeons were the Pythagorean tetrad; or the tetrad as the mother brought forth the decad who was Jesus – his name represented 10; or the tetrad was God, beginning, heaven and earth, as in the opening words of Genesis.[294] It could be argued, though, that this was no more than an attempt to set Genesis within the Pythagorean system, and that no temple element was involved or implied.

With the gnostic intitiation rituals, however, their 'baptisms', a temple origin is the only possible explanation. One ritual is described in a fragmented section of the *Trimorphic Protennoia,* where the female voice is speaking:

> I am inviting you into the exalted, perfect Light. Moreover, when you enter it you will be glorified by those who give glory, and those who enthrone will enthrone you. You will receive robes from those who give robes and the baptizers will baptize you and you will become gloriously glorious, the way you first were when you were [**] ...

- I delivered him to those who give robes [three names] and they [covered] him with a robe from the robes of the light.
- And I delivered him to the baptizers and they baptized him [three names] and they immersed him in the spring of the water of life.
- And I delivered him to those who enthrone [three names] and they enthroned him from the throne of glory.
- And I delivered him to those who glorify [three names] and they glorified him with the glory of the Fatherhood.

[294] *Against Heresies* I.1.1; I.15.2; I.18.1.

- And those who snatch away snatched away [three names] the servant of the great holy luminaries, and they took him into the light [place] of his Fatherhood.
- And [he received] the five seals* from the [light] of the Mother, Protennoia, and it was [granted] him to partake of the [mystery] of knowledge and he [became a light] in light.[295]

* the anointing.

The translation of the technical terms may sometimes be uncertain, but this ritual was either developed from, or was a memory of, many texts associated with the 'other voices' in our enquiry:

- In Psalm 110, the now-obscured anointing ritual, the Davidic king was initiated in the glory of the holy ones, 'born' with dew, i.e. oil, from a womb as the Morning Star, and then enthroned;
- In Isaiah 52–53 the anointed and transfigured suffering Servant was exalted. He was satisfied by the light and was given knowledge;
- In *2 Enoch* 22 Enoch stood before the throne, where he was anointed and given robes of glory that transformed him into an angel before he was instructed in the secret knowledge;
- In Revelation 12.5 the newly-born Son of the Woman clothed with the sun was born in the holy of holies and then snatched up to the throne of God.

Whatever is described in this *Trimorphic Protennoia* ritual resembled initiation into the angel world of the holy of holies. The question that cannot be answered is: was this an artificial conflation and reconstruction from ancient texts by people who wanted to lay claim to the temple; or was it a memory preserved by people who remembered the original link between those texts and wanted to perpetuate the temple?

Irenaeus reported that Hebrew words were used in gnostic baptism/initiation rituals and that sweet oil was used in the anointing 'to represent the fragrance that is above all'. The initiate was baptised 'into the name of the Father of the universe, into the truth, the Mother of all things, and into Him who descended on Jesus, into union and redemption and communion with the powers'. Even though this was transliterated and translated from a Hebrew original by a hostile writer, the temple roots are clear.[296] Another account shows the same pattern. The presiding person, in his role as 'father', sealed his 'son', who then said: 'I have been anointed with the white chrism that flows from the tree of life.'[297] This latter is very similar to the Christian

[295] *Trimorphic Protennoia*, CG XIII.1 45, 48.
[296] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.21.3.
[297] Origen, *Celsus* 6.27.

rite used in Syria at that time, when the baptising bishop was the one 'through whom you were sealed, and through whom you became sons of light, and through whom the LORD in baptism, by the imposition of the hand of the bishop, bore witness to each one of you saying "You are my son. I have this day begotten you."'[298]

Valentinus taught in the second century church in Rome, but older pre-Christian or non-Christian texts are known. One of these is the *Letter of Eugnostos* for which a parallel Christianised form has also survived, the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ.* Thus it is possible to see how a pre- or non-Christian text was expanded and attributed to Jesus as his explanation/ application of the older text. The *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* shows how specific elements from Christianity, such as names, were set within the pre-Christian 'temple' system. The *Letter of Eugnostos*[299] describes the world of the holy of holies and thus the origin of creation. There was the beginningless First Father who caused his form to come into being as an androgynous being. All the characters have several names, which makes for confusion. The androgynous figure in its male aspect had names such as Saviour, Begetter of all things, Adam of the Light, and in its female aspect, names such as Sophia, Mother of all, and Silence. This male-female then created a host of angels, who themselves emerged into various ranks of heavenly beings: Lords, archangels and angels. They were all in the shadowless light of glory, dwelling in their chariots, without pain or sickness, and existing at rest for [as?] the glory of the great male-female divine being. The Christianised form of the text has Jesus appear after the resurrection as a great angel of light to instruct his male and female disciples about the origin of creation. He identified himself as the Saviour [and by implication, as the male aspect of the androgynous divine being], and his disciples as the host of angels, the sons of God. He said he had come to 'reveal the name of the perfect one, the whole will of the mother of the holy angels ...'[300] Jesus was a teacher of Wisdom, and we recall the early Eucharistic prayer in the Didache: 'We give thanks to thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge thou hast made known to us through thy servant Jesus.'[301]

This all can seem very different from the familiar words of the New Testament. The unexpected self-description of Jesus in the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*, however, must be set alongside the words of Paul, who said much the same: 'Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God' (1 Cor.1.24). This twofold designation – the Power being male and the Wisdom being female – would be quite at home in a 'Gnostic' text. And what was 'the secret of the kingdom of heaven' (Mk 4.11) that Jesus revealed only to his closest disciples? What did John mean when he wrote: 'You have been anointed by

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[298] R. H. Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929, ii.32, p.93.
[299] *Letter of Eugnostos* CG III.3.
[300] *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*, CG III.4.118.
[301] *Didache* 9.

the Holy One and you know all things [or you all know] ... His anointing teaches you about everything and is true and is no lie ...' (1 Jn 2.20, 27). Why did Ignatius, the martyr bishop of Antioch around 100 CE describe the incarnation as 'Mary's childbearing happening in the Deep Silence of God', when Silence was one of the titles of the Lady?[302] Irenaeus, that self-proclaimed scourge of heretics, taught that the first principles of the Gospel included this interesting understanding of Isaiah 11.2: the sevenfold Spirit was *the emanation of the heavenly hierarchy that Moses had witnessed on Sinai.*

> The Spirit of God shall rest upon him,
> The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
> The spirit of counsel and strength,
> The spirit of knowledge and piety. (Lxx Isa.11.2)

for Irenaeus meant:

> Now this world is encompassed by seven heavens, in which dwell powers and angels and archangels doing service to God ...
> Wherefore also the Spirit of God is manifold in indwelling ...
> Now the heaven which encompasses the rest is Wisdom, and the second from it of understanding; and the third of counsel; and the fourth, reckoned from above, of might, and the fifth of knowledge and the sixth of godliness, and the seventh, this firmament of ours, is full of the fear of that Spirit which gives light to the heavens. For as the pattern, Moses received the 7-branched candlestick that shined continuously in the holy place; for as a pattern of the heavens he received this service, according to that which the Word spoke to him; 'Thou shalt make according to all the pattern of the things which thou hast seen in the mount'.[303]

He understood the description of the sevenfold Spirit to indicate six emanations of the Spirit and each of them was one of the heavens, perhaps what the Gnostics called Aeons. Moses had seen this in his vision on the summit of Sinai, which, in second temple texts, was equivalent to the holy of holies. The menorah, the symbol of Wisdom, represented the procession of the elements of Wisdom down through the heavens to earth. Irenaeus the guardian of true Christian teaching was describing, albeit in simple terms and with different names, something very like the Gnostics' vision of the emanations in the world of the angels. It may be, then, that the Christian adaptation of the *Letter of Eugnostos*, where Jesus set himself and his

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302 Ignatius, *Letter to the Ephesians* 19.
303 Irenaeus, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 9. This is recognisable as the *sephirotic* tree of the Kabbalah, which claims to be temple tradition.

disciples within the older temple scheme, was not a gnostic deviation from what Irenaeus called 'Apostolic Teaching'.

There are sufficient other links between Gnostic texts and the angel world of the holy of holies to make this a likely origin for Barbelo in their system. Some of the more fantastic speculations doubtless represent the wilder fringes of Gnosticism, with cult figures promoting themselves and their strange ideas, such as still happens in the Church today. But the core imagery and ideas have preserved a valuable glimpse of the older temple tradition, and especially of the Lady. She had many names and titles. She was the mother of the holy angels, the Virgin Mother.[304] Valentinus, according to Hippolytus, said that she was the mother of all things and that she was the heavenly Jerusalem, the fourfold one.[305]

First, Barbelo as the mother of the angels can be reconstructed from the Book of Revelation. Using the wordplay that characterised temple tradition, and translating the present Greek text back into the Hebrew of the original temple visions,[306] the Lady can be glimpsed through her antitype, the great harlot. It then becomes very likely that John knew her as Jerusalem and the mother of the angels, and since many of the visions in the Book of Revelation go back to Jesus himself,[307] it is possible that Jesus also knew the Lady as Jerusalem and the mother of the angels. Some of John's description recalls the great Cannanite goddess Asherah, but this is more likely to have come to him through a temple channel than through a folk memory of Canaanite myth. John described the great harlot thus.

> Then one of the seven angels ... said to me, 'Come I will show you the judgement of the great harlot, who is seated upon many waters ...
>
> [The angel] carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impuritites of her fornication; and on her forehead was written a name of mystery: 'Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth's abominations'. And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. (Rev.17.1-6)

It is likely that the original monster had ten horns on each of the seven heads, thus making seventy, the antitypes of the seventy angels of the

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[304] *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* CG III.4.118; *Gospel of Philip* CG II.3.63; *Gospel of the Egyptians*, CG III.2.42.

[305] Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 6.29.

[306] Ibid., pp.72–4.

[307] See my book *The Revelation*, op.cit., n.65 above, pp.64–9.

nations.[308] The seven heads were also the seven mountains on which the woman sat (Rev.17.9). The interpreting angel gave clues to the identity of the kings represented by the heads and the horns – perhaps these were new interpretations of an old image – but none for the seven mountains.

Enoch provides a possible explanation. On his heavenly journeys to the south, he saw seven mountains built of precious stones, and the summit of the central mountain was the throne of God. Next to the throne was a fragrant tree in the midst of other trees. The angel guide said the tree would one day be planted again in the holy place, and its fruit would give life to the chosen ones.[309] Enoch was describing the Lady, who 'was' the throne and the tree. She had gone to the south, but would return to the temple and feed her children. At the end of the visions, John described the restoration: the throne and the fruiting tree returned to the holy of holies (Rev. 22.1-5). The harlot had been destroyed (Rev.18.1–19.4), and so the Lady could resume her ancient place (Rev.21.9-21). She came as the throne, speaking to her people: '*From the throne came a voice* saying, "Praise our God ...".' Then John saw the new Jerusalem coming from heaven, that is, emerging from the holy of holies, and he heard '*a loud voice from the throne* saying "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men ..."' (Rev.19.5; 21.3, my emphases).

In the vision of the harlot, John saw the woman who had replaced the Lady.

- She sat on the scarlet beast who represented the antitype of the 70 sons of God, the angels of the nations.[310] The Lady was the mother of the sons of God.[311]
- The beast was full of blasphemous names. The angels of creation had been the names on the throne that flew off and formed the world,[312] and here the angels of the harlot would have had an exactly opposite role. The blasphemous names were her angels going to distort the world.
- The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, two of the four temple colours: red, blue, purple and white. There must have been some special significance for these two colours, because an early tradition says that Mary was a temple weaver, employed to make a new veil for the temple, and that she worked on the purple and the scarlet.[313]
- In the harlot's hand was a golden cup, full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication. 'Abomination' in the Hebrew could

[308] For Leviathan in temple tradition, see my book *The Revelation*, op.cit., n.65 above, pp.216–19.
[309] *1 Enoch* 18.6-8; 24.1–25.7.
[310] See above, p.124.
[311] See above, p.126.
[312] See above, p.290.
[313] *Infancy Gospel of James* 10.

have been *mašḥît*, wordplay on *mišḥāh*, the holy oil used to anoint the priests; and 'impurity' could have been *tum'āh*, which sounds exactly the same as *tumāh*, wholeness or integrity. Such a double correspondence is unlikely to have been coincidence, and suggests that the Lady had had a golden cup of anointing oil that imparted integrity. A related word, *tom*, with the same meaning, occurs throughout Proverbs, and characterises those who heed Wisdom: those who walk in *integrity* (Prov.2.7; 10.9; 19.1; 20.7; 28.6); on the *upright* way (Prov.10.29; 13.6). The related word *tāmîm* is used to describe the original state of the male-female being thrown from Ezekiel's Eden (Ezek.28.15), and it also occurs in Proverbs 2.21; 11.5; 28.18. In other words, these words were key terms in the Wisdom tradition.

- The cup itself appears in the Hebrew Scriptures in the context of anointing and prosperity, but also as the symbol of judgement. Second Isaiah knew that Jerusalem had drunk the cup of the LORD's wrath (Isa.51.17, 22), and the Targum translated 'The oracle concerning Babylon/Moab/Damascus', etc. as 'The oracle of the cup of cursing to give to Babylon/Moab/Damascus'.[314] The cup of cursing was proverbial, and here the harlot's golden cup implies a temple vessel, since all vessels used inside the temple were made of gold. It is possible that the effect of the cup was determined by the state of the recipient, as Paul reminded the church at Corinth: those who ate and drank the body and blood without discernment brought judgement upon themselves (1 Cor.11.27-29). In other words, the cup of salvation became the cup of judgement. The Psalms suggest there had been a cup ritual. 'The LORD ... is my cup' (Ps.16.5); 'Thou preparest a table before me ... thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows' (Ps.23.5); 'I will lift up the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the LORD' (Ps.116.13). Wisdom offered her disciples wine (Prov.9.5), presumably in a cup, but here, the harlot's cup is the cup of judgement, and she is drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the judgement was described as drinking the wine of wrath (Jer.25.15-28; also 49.12; 51.7), but here, in a parody of the Eucharist, the harlot has drunk the blood of the saints as the wine of wrath.
- On the harlot's forehead was written 'Mother of harlots and of earth's abominations'. 'Harlots' in Hebrew could have been *q*^{e}*dēšîm*, the 'prostitutes' whom Josiah expelled from the temple along with the Lady and who, with a change of one vowel, become *q*^{e}*došîm*, holy ones.[315] 'Abominations of the earth' could have been *mošḥ*^{a}*tîm*

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[314] Targum *Isaiah* 13.1; 15.1; 17.1.
[315] See above, p.43.

bā'āreṣ very similar to *m^ešîḥîm bā'āreṣ*, 'the anointed ones in the land'; cf. 'the holy ones in the land' (Ps.16.3, my translation). From her antitype we can glimpse the Lady who was the Mother of the holy anointed ones, consistent with Josiah banishing the Lady and the holy ones[316] and with the picture of the Woman clothed with the sun who was the mother of the Messiah, but also had 'other offspring' (Rev.12.17). These were Wisdom's children (Lk.7.35).
- Most striking of all is the harlot's name: 'Babylon the great', clearly identifying her with the evil city that Jerusalem had become. But why Babylon? When Isaiah called Jerusalem a harlot, he used the names 'Sodom and Gomorrah' (Isa.1.10), and elsewhere John called Jerusalem 'Sodom and Egypt' (Rev.11.8). This was the first time that Jerusalem was called Babylon – and the evil city was originally Jerusalem, not Rome as it became in later interpretation. The rulers and the beast made war on the harlot and burned her with fire (Rev.17.16), and this describes Rome's destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. 'Babylon', in Hebrew *bābel*, was the antitype of the original Lady and also conveyed the sense of corruption and evil. *Bābel* was the antitype of *Barbelo*, and the Gnostics knew that she had been the mother of the angels and the anointed ones.

Valentinus, born around the time when John compiled the visions into the Book of Revelation, described the Lady whom the harlot had ousted, and whom John so vivdly mocked:

> Sophia is the mother of all living creatures. [The angels] that have their citizenship in Jerusalem which is above, which is in heaven, this Jerusalem is Sophia ...[317]

Barbelo's other titles and roles can be seen in many texts: the virgin parent, the hidden one – which is just a literal translation of the meaning of the Hebrew word *'almah*, 'Virgin' – the mother of all life, the genius of Jerusalem and the fourfold divinity.

The *Apocryphon of John*, perhaps the earliest Gnostic text with Christian elements, has Jesus explain to John the inner process of the origin of creation. This fits well the enigmatic *raz nihyeh* of the Qumran texts, literally 'the mystery of becoming', which the young person aspiring to wisdom was encouraged to study.[318] The vocabulary of the *Apocryphon of John*, however, is not Hebrew but Coptic, it is highly specialised, and the names are often a

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316 See above, pp.41–3.

317 Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 6.16, 18, 29. He believed that the *Timaeus* was drawn from Egyptian teaching.

318 See above, p.292.

series of synonyms for the same being. Despite the difficulties of establishing equivalents, which can never be entirely certain, this is an account of what the *Mishnah* forbad: speculation about what is above, what is below, what was before time and what will happen in the future.[319] The nearest parallel in the Hebrew Scriptures is Proverbs 8.22-25, where Wisdom describes her origin. This too is a complex text, with significant differences between the Hebrew original and LXX, as we shall see.[320] Suffice it here to note that Wisdom was the first in creation to be 'brought forth', the verbs being *qnh* – which formed the title of Melchizedek's God, El Elyon, the *Procreator* of heaven and earth (Gen.14.19) – and *ḥll*, which means 'bring forth'. Wisdom *came forth* from the original Creator, 'the LORD' in Proverbs 8.22 probably the result of the post-deuteronomic conflation of older divine names. The Creator *brought forth* Wisdom, before the material world was formed. She was the first of the angelic creation, exactly as the *Apocryphon of John* describes the origin of the invisible creation.

Given that the technical terms, themselves ultimately derived from Hebrew temple terms, may have lost something in translation, the Lady of the temple that Ezekiel knew can be glimpsed in these descriptions of Barbelo, even in this broken text. El Elyon appears as the origin, the invisible male-female virgin spirit, the light from which all light, life and knowledge proceed. It is a stream of light-water, from which all things come forth.

> She came forth [ ] she who had [ ] before him in [ ] his light. This is the first [ ] before all of them [ ] forth from his mind. Her light [ ] light, the [ ] power which is [ ] image of the invisible virginal Spirit who is perfect. [ ] the glory, the Barbelo, the perfect glory in the aeons, the glory of the revelation, she glorified the virginal Spirit and praised him because thanks to him she had come forth. This is the first thought, his image; she became the womb of everything, for she is prior to them all, the Mother-Father, the first man,* the holy Spirit, the thrice male,** the three powers, the androgynous one with three names, the eternal aeon among the invisible ones ...[321]
>
> *Man in the sense of human being.
> ** In these texts 'male' seems to mean a spiritual being, and 'thrice' to mean supremely. Here, Barbelo is the high-rankng spiritual being.

Barbelo then requested four characteristics from the Creator, and she received foreknowledge, incorruption, eternal life and truth, represented as four angelic beings.

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319 Mishnah *Hagigah* 2.1.
320 See volume 2.
321 *Apocryphon of John* CG II.1.4-5.

> They stood at rest and they glorified the acceptable[322] invisible spirit and its Barbelo, because of which they had come to exist. This is the quintet of aeons belonging to the parent, which is the first human being, the image of the invisible spirit, namely: forethought, which is the Barbelo and thinking; foreknowledge, incorruption, eternal life and truth. This is the androgynous quintet of aeons, that is, the group of ten aeons which constitutes the parent.[323]

Another text which describes Barbelo is *Zostrianos*, the longest text in the Nag Hamadi library. It has no obvious Christian features, but was used by Christians. Porphyry mentioned a 'revelation' of Zostrianos that Christians were reading in the time of Plotinus, which claimed that Plato had failed fully to understand the Depth of the Essence of the Mind, *to bathos tēs noētēs ousias*, and Zostrianos, by implication, gave the correct account of this.[324] He ascended through the heavens in a cloud of light, accompanied by an angel of knowledge. 'I was baptised there and received the image of the glories. I became like one of them.'[325] This was exactly the experience of Enoch, before he was instructed in the secrets of creation,[326] and identifies this as a temple-rooted text. Zostrianos learned about Barbelo and the many angel powers who existed within Barbelo and were part of it. The text is broken, but it seems that components of Barbelo were the Hidden One, from which came the First Manifest One and from this came the Self Originate One.[327] Each was a cluster of angelic powers:

> Now the divine self originate is the first ruler of its aeons and of the angels, as though they were parts of it. For considered individually, the four belong to it. The fifth aeon consists of them all together and the fifth exists as one ...[328]

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[322] Or perhaps 'excellent'.
[323] *Apocryphon of John* 6. In this extract I have adapted the translation of Layton, who notes: 'The quintet is made up of forethought and its four emanations. The four emanations are considered here to be mere aspects of their source, so that the quintet as a whole can be spoken of as "the image of the invisible spirit," i.e. as being forethought, the Barbelo.' He noted further that the four aeons all had feminine names, and since they were androgynous, their masculine counterparts were assumed, and thus the number 10 was achieved, the decad. Layton, op.cit., n.261, p.31, n.6.
[324] Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 16. Plotinus died in 270 CE.
[325] *Zostrianos* CG VIII.1.5.
[326] 2 *Enoch* 22 describes his transformation. The following chapters summarise the heavenly knowledge.
[327] *Zostrianos* 20.
[328] *Zostrianos* 19, Layton's translation in op.cit., n.261, p.131.

Within the Hidden One, the highest 'part' of Barbelo, were:

> ...messengers [*?angels*] and demons and minds and souls and living beings and trees and bodies and those before them – both those of the simple elements of simple origins, and those in confusion and unmixed [...] air and water and earth and number and yoking [*?joining together*] and movement and [...] order and breath and all the rest ...
>
> They do not crowd one another but they also dwell within them, existing and agreeing with them as if they exist from a single origin. They are reconciled [*?live in harmony*] because they all exist in a single aeon of the Hidden One ...
>
> All of them exist in one since they dwell together and are perfected individually in fellowship and have been filled with the aeon [*?angel power*] who really exists.
>
> In that world are all living beings existing individually, yet joined together. The knowledge of the knowledge is there ...[329]

Layton recognised that this was a description of the Platonic Forms: 'The narrative context is lost. The concealed aeon, which is the highest constituent of the Barbelo aeon, contains the Platonic ideal forms of kinds of entity such as plants and animals, the basic elements, ("air, water earth") and abstractions such as "number", "connection"' etc.[330] Given the temple roots of this text, the Forms are more likely to be memories of the original holy of holies, with the points of light that Ezekiel described within the Living One; and Barbelo's role of joining together and making harmony alludes to the role of Wisdom 'holding all things together' (Lxx Prov.8.30).

The initiate who was 'washed' with the washing of the Hidden One, understood these things:

> By knowing the origin of these, how they all appear in a single head and how they are all joined and divided, and how those who have been divided join again, and how the parts [join] with the wholes and the species and [races] – if one knows all these things, he has washed in the washing of the Hidden One.[331]

At the end of his ascent, Zostrianos described becoming part of the divine Unity. Apophantēs [?Revealer] and Aphro [which looks like the Hebrew *'ephroah* meaning child or bud], the child of Virgin Light, appeared to him:

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[329] *Zostrianos* 113-117, J. H. Sieber's translation in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, San Fransisco: Harper and Row 1977, pp.388–9, the italics are my suggestions.
[330] Layton, op.cit., n.261, p.137 n.113a.
[331] *Zostrianos* 23, Sieber's translation, op.cit., n.329.

> and brought me to the first-appearing, great, male, perfect Mind, and I saw how all these who were there dwell within one. I joined with all of them and blessed the Hidden aeon and the Virgin Barbelo, and the Invisible Spirit. I became all perfect and I received strength. I was written in glory and was sealed and received there a perfect crown.[332]

These two texts exactly describe Enoch's experience. When he stood before the throne in the holy of holies, the accompanying angel told him the names of the four presences round the throne, and showed him the 'hidden things', the secrets of the heavens and how the kingdom, that is, the holy of holies/the origin of creation, was divided.[333] Then, like Enoch, Zostrianos descended through the lower aeons and back into the visible world, where he recorded his teaching.[334] As Zostrianos descended, he passed through the antitypes of the aeons, just as Enoch saw the fallen angels in the fifth heaven, which became the Pythagorean counter-earth.[335]

The three stages of the ascent into Barbelo are depicted in the *Three Steles of Seth*, which are a series of hymns for the stages of the ascent. Singing was part of the temple ascent tradition and music in the temple was not mentioned by the D writers. In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, Abraham was guided up to heaven by the angel Yahweh-El who was dressed as a high priest. The angel taught him the hymn of praise to the Eternal One, which seems to have been a protection for him as he approached the fire of the throne. As he sang, he came close to the throne [maybe even into the throne], and there a voice told him to look down. The heavens opened beneath him, and he saw the 'Forms': angels, 'the host of the invisible glory', stars obeying orders from them, and the firmament [represented in the temple by the veil] on which the whole creation was drawn. The Eternal One spoke to him:

> Understand the creation that was depicted/outlined of old on this expanse, the creatures which are in it and the age prepared after it. And I looked beneath the firmament at my feet and I saw the likeness of heaven and the things that were therein. And there the earth and its fruits and its moving things and its things that had souls and the host of men ... and the sea and its islands and its cattle and its fish ...[336]

The first hymn in the *Three Steles* is Seth praising his father Adam. The other six [?] hymns are praise of Barbelo in which s/he is described.

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332 *Zostrianos* 129.

333 *1 Enoch* 40.2; 41.1.

334 E.g. *1 Enoch* 81.5-6; *2 Enoch* 33.3-12; so too R. Akiba, who descended and taught the mystery he had learned, see above p.286.

335 *Zostrianos* 129.

336 *Apocalypse of Abraham* 20-21, usually dated about 100 CE, after the destruction of the temple.

O you who have been divided into the quintet!
O you who have been given to us in triple-powerfulness!
O you who have been ingenerately produced!
O you who have emanated from the superior (realm), and for the sake of the inferior (realm) have gone forth into the middle ...
You have become divided everywhere: you have remained one.[337]

This is Wisdom as described in the Wisdom of Solomon:

Though she is but one, she can do all things,
and while remaining in herself, she renews all things;
in every generation she passes into holy souls
and makes them friends of God and prophets ... (Wis.7.27)

The second hymn is similar:

Great is the first aeon, the male virginal Barbelo, the first glory of the invisible Father, she who is called perfect. Thou [fem.] hast first seen him who really pre-exists, that he is non-being, and from him and through him thou hast pre-existed eternally ... We bless thee, producer [fem.] of perfection, aeon-giver [fem.] thou hast [seen] the eternal ones that they are from shadow ... And thou hast become innumerable. And thou didst find, thou didst continue being one [fem.]; yet becoming numerable in division, thou art threefold and thou art one [fem.] of the one [masc.].

The first divisions are as thou wast divided. Unite us as thou hast been united. Teach us [those] things which thou dost see. Empower [us] that we may be saved to eternal life. For [we] are [each] a shadow of thee as thou art a shadow [of that] first pre-existent one ...[338]

This is reminiscent of John 17, where Jesus described the nature of the unity between himself, his disciples and future disciples, and the Father. This is describing emanation.

I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me. (Jn 17.20-23)

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[337] *Three Steles of Seth* CG VII.5. 120-121, Layton's translation in op.cit., n.261.
[338] *Three Steles of Seth* CG VII.5. 122-24. Sieber's translation in op.cit., n.329.

The three aspects of Barbelo are described in the *Threefold First Thought*, [*Trimorphic Protennoia*], where s/he describes itself:

> I am the Invisible One within the All. It is I who counsel those who are hidden, since I know the All that exists in it. I am numberless beyond everyone, I am immeasurable, ineffable, yet whenever I wish, [I shall] reveal myself ...
>
> [I] Barbelo, the perfect glory, and the immeasurable invisible one who is hidden. I am the image of the invisible spirit, and it is through me that the all took shape, and the Mother, the Light, which she appointed as virgin, she who is called Meirothea, the intangible Womb, the unrestrained and immeasurable voice.[339]

Another text, the Foreigner [*Allogenes*] describes Barbelo as 'endowed with the patterns and forms of those who truly exist, the image of the Hidden One',[340] and so despite the damaged texts and the necessarily tentative translations, a picture of Barbelo emerges. She is recognisable as the Lady whom Ezekiel knew. She was Wisdom, the first one brought forth before the creation of the visible world (Prov.8.22-25), and known to the Targumist who included Wisdom in the translation/explanation of Genesis 1.1. 'From the beginning, (the Word) of the LORD with Wisdom created ...'[341] She was fourfold, as shown by Ezekiel's impenetrable mixture of singular and plural forms. She was the Hidden One, and the Egyptian community remembered that this word *'almāh*, in this context, meant the Virgin, as shown by their translation of Isaiah 7.14. And she was the Mother of all living things, represented in Ezekiel's vision by the points of light all around her. Pythagoras learned about her when he spent time in Syria, and so she became Timaeus's Living Creature. Zostrianos and Justin[342] both claimed that Plato had not fully understood the system he adopted and adapted, and they may well have been correct. As too was Burkert, when he concluded, on the basis of entirely different evidence, that Pythagoras had been a 'hierophant of the Great Mother mysteries'.[343]

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339 *Trimorphic Protennoia* CG XIII.1.35, 38. Sieber's translation in op.cit., n.329.
340 *Allogenes* C.G.XII.3.51.
341 Targum *Neofiti*, Gen.1.1.
342 See above, p.299.
343 Burkert, op.cit., n.166, p.165.

6

Losing the Lady

Double Meanings

The stories in the Hebrew Scriptures are not always what they seem. The older sagas in Genesis are often telling two stories: an ancient myth or legend and also an episode in the history of Judah or Jerusalem. The study of the component parts of the Pentateuch has occupied scholars for generations, but critical study of the whole corpus is a more recent development. The aptly named Books of Moses record not only the life and the Law of Moses, but also encrypt the account of how his tradition became the dominant interpretation of Hebrew history and religion. With Moses, the history of the people became to a large extent their religion, and the older stories were used to tell the new story.

The two versions of the fourth commandment illustrate the change: the older version in Exodus says that the Sabbath was kept to remember that the LORD made heaven and earth in six days and then rested, and his people had to do the same. The rhythm of their life had to accord with creation (Exod.20.8-11). The later Deuteronomic version says that the Sabbath was kept to remember how the LORD released them from slavery in Egypt, and they were to give their servants and animals a similar rest (Deut.5.12-15). The rhythm of life was shaped by their history. 'The Pentateuch', observed Clines many years ago, 'functions as an address to the exiles, or, perhaps it would be better to say, the self-expression of the exiles.' It was their interpetation of their history.[1] We have already seen how the 'other voices' told a different history – one without Moses – and how they regarded the exiles as an apostate generation.

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[1] D. J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, Sheffeld: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 10, 1978, pp.98, 100.

The Abraham stories described the religion of Judah and Jerusalem, not just as it had been in the distant past but how it was immediately before Josiah's purges.[2] The two sagas – the patriarchs and Moses – were joined, and the transition was marked by Moses learning the new name for God. The deity of the patriarchs, who had been known as Shaddai, was in future to be identified with Yahweh, the LORD. The storyteller made a voice speak to Moses from the burning bush, and this was the Lady's farewell, even though her people did not disappear from Judah. They are listed among those who resettled Jerusalem after the exile, but hidden under a new name: the sons of Sᵉnā'āh, an otherwise unknown name. This group appears in both lists of settlers (Ezra 2.35; Neh.7.38), each time at the end of the list of laity, after the sons of Jericho, and each time by far the largest group: Ezra has 3,630, Nehemiah 3,930. The otherwise unknown name has been explained as a deliberate misspelling of Śᵉnā'āh, from *śānē'*, hate,[3] implying that these people were the sons of unfavoured – 'hated' – wives such as Leah had been (Gen.29.31), but whose children could not be disinherited (Deut.21.15). This name appears once with the article, *Ha*ssenaah (Neh.3.3), which suggests it was a title rather than a name, and a 'passive' form of it, also with the article, occurs: the sons of the *sᵉnu'āh*, (1 Chron.9.7; Neh.11.9), which in English becomes the name Hassenuah.

There may indeed have been wordplay, suggesting that these people were the sons of the hated woman, but the name itself suggests who that woman might have been. She could have been the glorious one, a name derived from the root *šānāh*, meaning 'be exalted' or 'shine'. Emerton argued that the obscure word *šēnā'* should be explained as coming from this root, and translated 'honour'.[4] This wordplay would involve changing *s* to *š*. 'Hated woman' involves changing *s* to *ś*, and the similar sounds of all three forms – *s*, *š* and *ś* – would have invited wordplay. But the written form of the name Sᵉnā'āh looks very like the word translated 'bush', *sᵉneh*, a word that is found only in the story of the burning 'bush' (Exod.3.2-4). By adding one silent letter, *aleph*, the word, 'bush' becomes the mysterious Sᵉnā'āh.[5] The LXX understood that it was a prickly bush, *batos*, and the Exodus storyteller says that the angel of the LORD spoke to Moses from the bush.

The *Blessing of Moses*, which has the Lady concealed in its opening verses[6] reveals that 'bush dweller' was another of her titles. Joseph was

[2] See above, pp.77–8.
[3] A different Hebrew 's', see BDB, p.702.
[4] J. A. Emerton, 'ŠĒNĀ' in Psalm CXXVII 2', Vetus Testamentum XXIV.1 (1974), pp.15–31, p.30.
[5] Exactly as was done to change the Lady's title of creatrix, *qnh*, to 'object of jealousy', *qn'h*, see above, p.184.
[6] See above, p.184.

blessed with '... the best gifts of the earth and its fullness, the favour of *him that dwelt in the bush*' (Deut.33.16). The title here is *škny snh*, and some have suggested that *snh*, bush, should be corrected to *syny*, Sinai, 'him who dwelt on Sinai'. The form *škny*, however, could be an 'old feminine termination', as is found in Sarai, the original name of Sarah (Gen.12.5).[7] The verb is *škn*, dwell,[8] and so the title here is probably 'the [Lady] who dwelt in the bush'. The sons of Senaah and its variant forms were those who continued to follow the Lady of the 'bush' even after the exile, and that accounts for the voice from the bush declaring that in the era of Moses, the name would no longer be El Shaddai, as in the time of the patriarchs (Exod.6.3), but Yahweh (Exod.3.14).

The burning bush is how her tree of life was remembered. When Enoch ascended through the heavens he saw the tree of life in the third heaven. 'That tree is indescribable for pleasantness and fine fragrance, and is more beautiful than any (other) created thing that exists. And from every direction, it has an appearance which is gold-looking and crimson, and with the form of fire.' It had 'something of every orchard tree and every fruit'.[9] One of the Nag Hamadi texts, whose modern title is *On the Origin of the World*, describes the tree of life standing next to the tree of knowledge in Paradise: 'The colour of the tree of life is like the sun and its branches are beautiful. Its leaves are like those of a cypress. Its fruit is like the clusters of white grapes. Its height rises up to heaven.'[10] Wisdom, compared her tree-self to several trees: 'I grew tall like a cedar ... like a cypress ... like a palm tree ... like rose plants ... like a beautiful olive tree ... like a plane tree' (Ben Sira 24.13-14). The tree of life was not any one particular tree. John saw the tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit, one for each month (Rev.22.2), and the prescriptions for the tabernacle menorah say that the lamp had to be made of gold, with seven branches on which were cups and flowers like almonds (Exod. 25.31-39). The burning bush which Moses saw on Sinai had formerly been the golden tree of life by the throne in the temple, and the Lady spoke from her tree.

It has become customary to translate and read the Hebrew Scriptures as an account of one male deity, and the feminine presence is not made clear. Had it been the custom to read of a female Spirit or to find Wisdom capitalised, it would have been easier to make the link between the older faith in Jerusalem and later developments outside the stream represented by the canonical texts. At the beginning of Genesis, there would have been, *and should be* 'the Spirit of God, she was fluttering over the face of the deep' (Gen.1.2), and in the Psalms, that the LORD made all his works with Wisdom

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[7] See *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, rev. E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, Oxford: Clarendon, (1910) 1970, # 80.l.

[8] Whence the later Shekinah.

[9] *2 Enoch* 8.3-4.

[10] *On the Origin of the World* CG II.5.110.

(Ps.104.24). The problem is not just one of modern translations; there are gender ambiguities even in the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch. In all but 11 cases, the feminine pronoun in the Pentateuch is written as a masculine form, and grammarians cannot explain this. In many cases, the Masoretes indicated this difficulty by putting the vowels of the feminine form around the masculine consonants, but there may have been other examples of a feminine presence that they overlooked.

> Outside the Pentateuch, the distinction [between masculine and feminine consonantal forms] is found in the oldest documents ... Consequently there only remains the hypothesis that the writing of *hw'* [the masculine form] for *hy'* [the feminine form] rests on *an orthographical peculiarity which in some recension of the Pentateuch-text was almost consistently followed...*'[11]

One might speculate as to why. It was not an ancient form, as other texts of comparable age have the two distinct forms. It seems that when ancient stories from the time of the Lady were assembled into the Books of Moses, there was an extraordinary gender confusion with pronouns. In an unpointed text, there would be no way of knowing the gender of the pronoun; how the word was to be read – as 'he' or 'she' – was established and imposed by later tradition.

The present form of the Hebrew Scriptures begins with the end of the first temple. There may have been practical reasons for this; the destruction of the Jerusalem is unlikely to have spared any sacred writings. But there were also ideological reasons; there are many indications – not only in the Pentateuch – that much of the current Hebrew text was formed by the spiritual heirs of the Deuteronomists. The old stories were not told, *they were retold*, and none more so than the story of creation and the garden of Eden. What the stories have in common is an Eden-temple that was lost, and high priest(s) driven out because they had rejected or abused Wisdom. The priests of the Lady had been literally expelled by Josiah; the remaining priests with their new ways were expelled from their heavenly status and became mere mortals: dust. The destruction of the temple must have confirmed this. The distinction between the two priesthoods was known to the early Christians and set out in Hebrews 7: the mortal Aaronite priesthood, based on human descent and so inherited through death; and the Melchizedek priesthood, conferred through being 'raised up', that is, resurrected, to the angel status of son of God (Heb.7.1-28).

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[11] Gesenius, op.cit., n.7 # 32.l, my emphases.

Before Genesis

The problems with any study of the creation-and-Eden stories are when they were written, or rather, the order in which they were written, by whom, and why. Genesis 1–3 is usually taken as the norm, and then all the other versions of the creation-and-Eden stories are approached as problems: how did the original story come to be retold, distorted or expanded in this way, as in Ezekiel 28 or *Jubilees* 3? But the Genesis creation-and-Eden stories are not mentioned elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures, even though there are other creation-and-Eden stories. It is likely, then, that the 'norm' was already a reworking of older stories, set as the preface to the Books of Moses to introduce the entire 'Moses' tradition. The questions should be: why was the Genesis account rewritten in this way; and how do other 'variants' of the stories relate to what seems to be the older form in the Hebrew Scriptures, Ezekiel's Eden story.

Ezekiel's is a very different story from Genesis, but its vocabulary links not only to the Genesis Eden story but also to the priestly account of Noah's flood. Ezekiel was a priest, and so this latter is hardly surprising, since one of the strands of the Noah story was written by a priestly author. In his Eden story, Ezekiel described a heavenly being who had been created 'blameless', *tāmîm*, one of the key words in the Wisdom tradition, but also the priestly term for a perfect animal that was suitable for sacrifice (e.g. Exod.12.5). An imperfect animal was 'blemished', a word derived from *šḥt* meaning ruin/corrupt (e.g. Mal.1.14). In both Ezekiel's Eden and the story of Noah, the contrast was between these two states: the pure and the corrupt. Noah was blameless, *tāmîm*, in comparison with others in his time who had been corrupted by the fallen angels. As a result, the land was corrupted and filled with violence, *ḥāmās* (Gen.6.9-12). Similarly, Ezekiel's perfect heavenly being in Eden had corrupted its wisdom, and 'they filled the midst of you with violence' (Ezek.28.16-17, translating literally).

Noah's flood encoded the story of the Babylonian invasion of the land and conquest of Jerusalem. Second Isaiah was using the image about 50 years after the disaster (Isa.54.9), but whether he inspired the priestly writers in Genesis or took his image from their work, cannot be known. The link between Noah and the Babylonian crisis was their way of interpreting recent events, and is not a construct of recent scholarship. 'The story of the great deluge as retold by P may ... be read as a kind of parable of the inundation of Israel by the nations, resulting in exile from the land (earth). If this is so, it would be only one of several examples in P of the paradigmatic interpretation of events recorded in the earlier sources with reference to the contemporary situation.'[12] Following their line of double meanings, the fallen angels whose evil influence caused the flood (Gen.6.1-8) must refer to

[12] J. Blenkinsopp, 'The Structure of P', Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 38 (1976), pp.275–92, p.284.

the corrupted angel-priests in Jerusalem, who left heaven and came to earth. Genesis 6 tells this story but with no detail, except that 'every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart/mind was only evil all the time' (Gen.6.5, my translation). This story was the foundation myth of the Enoch tradition and there is no doubt that it was known in Jerusalem in the time of Isaiah.[13] The fallen angels, according to Enoch, had used their heavenly knowledge without regard for the law of the Holy One, and so had revealed skills and secrets that had corrupted the earth. The fallen angels who caused the flood is a thinly veiled account of how the corrupted and secularised priesthood in Jerusalem caused the disaster of the Babylonian invasion. Jeremiah had spoken out against this corruption (Jer.5.20-31; 7.1-15).[14]

Noah himself represented the uncorrupted older priesthood. The 'other voices' told many stories about Noah and his family that were not included in the Pentateuch, presumably because its compilers were the 'apostates' who built the second temple. Noah was the great grandson of Enoch (Gen.5.21-29), and his brother's son was Melchizedek. This detail is not in Genesis, but the Enoch tradition knew of Noah's brother Nir and his son Melchizedek, and of the matriarch Bitenosh, their mother.[15] The *Book of Jubilees*, which tells the same stories as Genesis but with more detail, says that Noah received teaching about the first fruits and the Sabbath year that had come down through the family from his great grandfather Enoch.[16] He in turn taught his sons. Noah also wrote a book recording all that the angels had taught him about healing the illnesses brought by the fallen angels.[17] The stories of the patriarchs told in *Jubilees*[18] claim that many laws and customs did not originate with Moses. This may be a second temple fiction, or maybe other voices still remembered that these laws and customs had been part of the pre-Moses, that is, pre-Josianic, religion. They remembered that Moses came relatively late to their cultic history.

The post-Josianic era of apostate priests was also remembered in the *Damascus Document*, and using the same imagery. This text says that the apostacy began in the first temple period, and that a group had formed who wanted to return to the older ways, seeing themselves as the faithful Zadokites prophesied by Ezekiel (Ezek.44.15). Their Teacher of Righteousness had appeared 410 years after Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Judah and Jerusalem, and the specific grievances of the group reflect the situation in the early second century BCE. Others, they said, had gone

[13] He described his homeland under the influence of fallen angels: money, weapons, divination, cosmetics and jewellery, Isa.2.6-8; 4.16-23. These were not breaches of the ten commandments, they were the sins taught by the fallen angels as Enoch described them, *1 Enoch* 7–8.
[14] See above, p.66.
[15] *2 Enoch* 70–71.
[16] *Jubilees* 7.34-39.
[17] *Jubilees* 10.13.
[18] And in the *Testament of Levi* 9.1-14

astray because they disobeyed God, as did the fallen angels. To the faithful group, the hidden things were revealed, including the sacred calendar which the apostates had abandoned. They hoped to recover 'all the glory of Adam', and their manifesto begins: 'God loves knowledge. Wisdom and understanding he has set before Him, and prudence and knowledge serve Him.'[19] Whatever the date of the *Document*, the concerns and the imagery are those of Ezekiel's Eden: a fallen heavenly figure, Wisdom and knowledge, an apostate priesthood and the lost glory of Adam.

There is no mention of the glory of Adam in the Genesis stories, but since this phrase occurs often in the Qumran texts, that community must have known more about Adam than is presently found in the Hebrew Scriptures. The glorious Adam is also implied in the Gnostic texts. The Qumran community hoped to regain 'all the glory of Adam' and to learn 'the knowledge of the Most High ... the wisdom of the sons of heaven'.[20] They prayed: 'Thou hast fashioned A[dam] our [F]ather in the likeness of [Thy] glory ...'[21] 'Adam's wisdom makes his face shine', said one of the wise teachers (Eccl.8.1, translating literally), but Genesis does not mention Adam's wisdom. A rabbi in the late third century CE, however, said that in the time of the Messiah, everything Adam had lost would be restored: his shining state, his life, his height, the fruit of the earth, the fruit of the trees and the bright light of the heavenly luminaries.[22] Where is that in Genesis, and whence the similar picture of Adam in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, 'a man of very great height, terrible in breadth, incomparable in aspect, entwined with a woman who was equal to the man in aspect and size'?[23]

When Adam was created he was told: be fruitful, from the root *prh*; and multiply, from the root *rbh*; fill the earth, subdue it, *kbš*, and have dominion, *rdh* over living creatures (Gen.1.28). There is nothing in this way of reading the text to explain the glorious Adam that the Qumran community and others knew. But the text can be pronounced differently, and then a different Adam appears. The Hebrew *prh*, 'be fruitful' can in some forms sound like the word *p'r*, be beautiful or glorious, and *rbh*, multiply, can also mean become great. 'Subdue', *kbš* also has other possible meanings, for example in Micah 7, where the context is the day of atonement:

> Who is a God like you, bearing/carrying iniquity and passing over transgression ...
> He will again have compassion upon us, and he will *kbš* our iniquities. (Mic.7.18, 19, my translation)

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[19] *Damascus Document*, CD I-IV.
[20] *Community Rule*, 1QS IV.
[21] 4Q504.8.
[22] Rabbi Samuel b. Nahman, in *Genesis Rabbah* XII.6.
[23] *Apocalypse of Abraham* 23.5.

Here *kbs* must have the sense of restoring the bonds of the covenant that iniquity has broken, and subdue is not an appropritate translation. It needs to be a word to convey the sense of healing the broken covenant bonds and restoring them. This is what Adam was created to do, together with 'having dominion' which, as is clear from the account of Solomon's reign, implied maintaining peace (1 Kgs 4.21, 24). The original Adam was probably told 'be beautiful/glorious, be great, and fill the earth [with glory/the knowledge of the LORD? Isa.11.9] and hold it together in peace', and this would account for the glorious Adam who was remembered for so long and by so many, the one who had the knowledge of the Most High and the wisdom of the sons of heaven.

Genesis 1 describes the six-day vision of creation, seen by Moses on Sinai and represented in the tabernacle he was told to erect. On the sixth day, *'elohîm* said 'Let us make Adam as our image' (Gen.1.26, translating literally), and the creation of Adam was represented in the tabernacle by the purification of Aaron and his sons, the high priests (Exod.40.30-32). Adam was the heavenly archetype of the high priest, and the human high priest was the manifestation of Adam. He had to wear holy garments for glory, *kābôd*, and for beauty, *tip'eret*, (Exod.28.2), presumably to represent the glory and beauty of Adam. The garments were made by people who were wise of mind/heart, and who were filled with the spirit of Wisdom (Exod.28.3). One wonders how these weavers related to the temple weavers expelled by Josiah along with Asherah, women who did their weaving within the temple (2 Kgs 23.7). Genesis 1 describes the origin and role of the high priest, the male-and-female image of the Creator.

A female element in the high priesthood is not apparent in the Hebrew Scriptures, but would explain the otherwise startling imagery in Ben Sira, where Wisdom describes herself as the high priest in Jerusalem.

> I dwelt in high places,
> And my throne was in a pillar of cloud ...
> Then the Creator of all things gave me a commandment,
> And the one who created me assigned a place for my tent.
> And he said, 'Make your dwelling in Jacob,
> And in Israel receive your inheritance.'
> From eternity, in the beginning, he created me,
> And for eternity I shall not cease to exist.
> In the holy tabernacle I ministered before him,
> And so I was established in Zion.
> In the beloved city likewise he gave me a resting place,
> And in Jerusalem was my dominion. (Ben Sira 24.4, 8-11)

The Lady enthroned in a pillar of cloud was established in the tabernacle in the holy city. Ben Sira was written in Hebrew in Jerusalem about 190 BCE, and later translated into Greek by the author's grandson, who was

living in Egypt. The Lady and her role must have been familiar to the Jewish communities in both Jerusalem and Egypt at that time.

The vision of creation in Genesis 1 was originally granted to those such as the king who looked out from the holy of holies, and when the Moses traditions incorporated Sinai into the Exodus saga, Moses took over the ancient roles of the sacral king/high priest.[24] Isaiah had stood in the holy of holies and learned that the glory filled the whole earth' (Isa.6.3); Second Isaiah was reminded what he had learned about creation and history 'from the beginning', that is, when he too stood in the beginning, the holy of holies (Isa.40.21-23). Whoever wrote Psalm 8 had meditated on this vision of the role of Adam:

> When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
> The moon and the stars which you have established;
> What is mankind, that you remember him?
> And the son of Adam that you pay attention to him?
> You made him a little less than *'ᵉlohîm*/angels,
> You crowned him with glory and splendour.
> You caused him to rule, *mšl*, over the works of your hands
> And have put all things under his feet ... (Ps.8.3-6, my translation)

The verb used here, *mšl*, is also used to describe the role of Adam in some Qumran texts,[25] and has an interesting web of associations. It was linked to *dᵉmût*, Form, and implied maintaining the correspondence of earth and heaven. Thus Isaiah wrote, when proclaiming that there could be no carved image of the LORD:

> To whom will you liken me, make me equal,
> And compare me, that we may be alike?

Here, 'liken' and 'be alike' are both verbal forms of *dᵉmût*, and 'compare' is *mšl*, 'rule' but here with [what seems to us] its other meaning 'compare'. Micah described a woman giving birth to the ruler, *môšēl*, of Israel who would emerge from eternity. This was Adam the sacral king, borne by the Lady, and exalted by bearing the name of the LORD (Mic.5.2-4, my translation). His role was to uphold the comparison, the pattern of heaven on earth, and here we see the context of the LORD's question from the whirlwind to Job:

> Do you know the engraved things of heaven?
> Are you able to set up their *mištār* on earth? (Job 38.33, my translation)

The word *mištār* is otherwise unknown.

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[24] See above, pp.32, 49.
[25] 1QS III.17; 4Q 504.8.

Here too we glimpse Ezekiel's cherub who was the 'seal of proportion' (Ezek.28.12). This understanding of how heaven related to earth was expressed in proverbs and parables, the characteristic literary forms of Wisdom teaching, and both were designated by the same word, pronounced *māšāl*.[26] Genesis 1, then, was based on ancient priestly material that underlies several other texts, and was prior to, and assumed by, Genesis 2–3 and Ezekiel 28.

Relating the undoubtedly ancient priestly material in Genesis 1 to Genesis 2–3 has always been a problem, because there are, apparently, two creation stories. Philo 'solved' the problem by understanding the first account as the forming of the incorporeal ideas, and then Genesis 2.4b–3.24 as the making of the material world.

> What is the meaning of the words, 'And God made every green thing of the field before it came into being on the earth, and every grass before it grew' (Gen.2.5)? In these words he alludes to the incorporeal ideas. For the expression 'before it came into being' points to the perfection, *telos*, [or perhaps 'ideal' or 'purpose'] of every green thing and grass, of plants and trees. And as Scripture says that before they grew on earth he made plants and grass and other things, it is evident that He made incorporeal and intelligible ideas in accordance with the intelligible nature which these sense-perceptible things on earth were meant to imitate.[27]

Thus too in *On the Creation:*

> For God, being God, assumed that a beautiful copy would never be produced apart from a beautiful pattern, and that no object of perception would be faultless which was not made in the likeness of an original discerned only by the intellect. So when he willed to create this visible world, he first fully formed the intelligible world, in order that He might have the use of a pattern wholly God-like and incorporeal in producing the material world as a later creation, the very image of the earlier ...[28]

And explaining Genesis 2.4-5:

> Is he not manifestly describing the incorporeal ideas present only to the mind, by which, as by seals, the finished objects that meet our senses were moulded? ... We must suppose that in the case of all other objects

[26] We shall return to this in volume 2.
[27] Philo, *Questions on Genesis* I.2.
[28] Philo, *Creation* 16.

also, on which the senses pronounce judgement, the original forms and measures, to which all things that come into being owe shape and size, subsisted before them.[29]

This is usually explained as Philo's Platonising,[30] but it may only be that he found in Plato the vocabulary to express ancient temple ideas. If Genesis 1 was the temple vision of creation which 'Moses' had to copy on earth, then it would have been a vision of the engraved things [the Forms], created outside time. This view of creation is implied in another wisdom text: 'He who lives for ever, created all things *at the same time*' (Ben Sira 18.1: Lxx *koinē*, Vg. *simul*).

The creation vision of Genesis 1 came from the priests of the first temple; Ezekiel knew it, as did Isaiah, with his glimpse of One anointed with the Spirit to uphold peace on the holy mountain and fill the earth with the knowledge of the LORD (Isa.11.1-9). Psalm 104 also describes creation:

O LORD, how manifold are thy works!
With Wisdom thou hast made them all ... (Ps.104.27)

Proverbs has Wisdom describe her role in the creation, and this too assumes the temple world view. Wisdom was with the Creator before the material world was made, and was beside him when he made the engravings of creation.[31] Wisdom must have been part of the original account in Genesis 1, but in the post-Moses account she appears only as a spirit of *'elohîm*, fluttering on the face of the waters (Gen.1.2), or, in some recent 'translations' as 'a mighty wind' (Gen.1.2, NEB) or 'a wind from God' (NRSV). The Targumist, however, knew she had been there, and so rendered the opening of Genesis: 'From the beginning the LORD with Wisdom created and perfected the heavens and the earth.'[32] This has been explained as the Targumist harmonising Genesis 1 and Proverbs 8, but this suggestion does not explain the line in Psalm 104, nor Jeremiah 10.12: 'He established the world by his Wisdom'; nor the Creator[33] declaring that Adam would be made as the divine image, male and female (Gen.1.27). Whence the female in the divine, unless she was the Spirit fluttering over the waters or Wisdom, another name by which she was known?

Hence the original Adam: a glorious male-female image of the Creator, destined to be great and to uphold the creation in peace. Then disaster

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[29] Ibid., 129, 130.
[30] For discussion, see D. T. Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses*, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001, pp.309–13.
[31] See above, pp.168, 292.
[32] Thus Targum *Neofiti*, Genesis 1.1. There is some text confusion and debate about the letters around 'the LORD created', but there is no possible confusion over Wisdom.
[33] *'elohîm* in Genesis, but the LORD in Targum *Neofiti*.

struck Adam's realm, and the two biblical stories of the garden of Eden are reactions to the upheavals in the period from Josiah to the destruction of the city. Both Ezekiel 28 and Genesis 2–3 follow Genesis 1.1–2.4, as does Genesis 5, which resumes the story of Adam created after the *d*^e^*mût* of *ʾ*^e^*lohîm*.

The Crisis

The destruction of the temple and the city had to be explained. The D writer said the disaster had been caused by the sins of Manasseh [687–642 BCE] almost a century before the events (2 Kgs 24.3-4); he could not blame Josiah or his heirs, because this was not what he was trying to prove. The refugees in Egypt said the disaster had been caused by abandoning the Queen of Heaven who had protected Judah and Jerusalem (Jer.44.16-19). Jeremiah linked the disasters – bloodshed, famine, disease – not to the Babylonian invasion but to the prophets and priests who had no knowledge (Jer.14.18, also 5.20-31) and to the teachers who had not stood in the heavenly council and so had not heard the word of the LORD (Jer.23.15, 22). The new 'wise men' had rejected the teaching, he said, the scribes wrote with a false pen, and so disaster would come (Jer.8.8-13).

Josiah had brought violence to the land, killing the priests of the rural shrines (2 Kgs 23.20). The years after Josiah had also been times of violence and oppression. It is not possible to date all the material in Jeremiah, but a consistent picture emerges of corrupted religious leaders, and social and economic injustice.

> Search [Jerusalem's] squares to see if you can find a man
> One who does justice and seeks truth,
> That I may pardon her. (Jer.5.1)
>
> For wicked men are found among my people ...
> Therefore they have beome great and rich,
> They have grown fat and sleek.
> They know no bounds in deeds of wickedness;
> They judge not with justice
> the cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper,
> and they do not defend the rights of the needy.
> Shall I not punish them for these things? says the LORD. (Jer.5.26-29)
>
> For from the greatest of them,
> Every one is greedy for unjust gain;
> And from prophet to priest,
> Every one deals falsely. (Jer.6.13; cf. 23.14)

O ... that I might leave my people and go away from them!
For they are all adulterers, a company of treacherous men ...
For they proceed from evil to evil,
And they do not know me, says the LORD. (Jer.9.2-3)

Jeremiah's condemnation of Jehoiakim was unsparing:

Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness,
And his upper rooms by injustice;
who makes his neighbour serve him for nothing,
And does not give him his wages ...
Do you think you are a king
Because you compete in cedar?
Did not your father eat and drink
And do justice and righteousness? ...
But you have eyes and heart only for dishonest gain
For shedding innocent blood,
And for practising oppression and violence. (Jer. 22.13, 15, 17)

Ezekiel records the same situation. He denounced the bloodshed, the social disintegration, the immorality, the bribes and extortion, and warned that disaster would come. Priests had done violence to the Law and profaned holy things; rulers had destroyed people for dishonest gains; the poor and the needy had been ignored: 'Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath' (Ezek.22.6-31). There are many other examples. The years after Josiah must have been a time of great corruption and social disintegration, little mentioned because the D writer directs us to focus on the evil reign of Manasseh.

The refugees in Egypt blamed the situation on abandoning the Queen of Heaven, and Jeremiah implied the same: a change in teaching, a new 'wisdom', lack of knowledge, falsehood, scribes who falsified their texts. These are the themes that appear in sequels to Genesis 1: Ezekiel described a heavenly figure who had corrupted wisdom for the sake of trade; and Genesis 2–3 described a human figure who had been tempted to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, rather than from the tree of life, the symbol of Wisdom. Both were reactions to, and explanations of, the loss of the Lady. The LXX of Ezekiel 28, as we shall see, translated the text in the light of Genesis 2–3, showing that the Jewish community in Egypt read Ezekiel's Eden as a parallel to the Genesis account, even though its present form sets it in Tyre.

In addition to the rejection of Wisdom, there was the crisis of coalescence. The Second Isaiah had the LORD claim to be El, the only deity; it was a major part of his proclamation: 'I am El' (Isa.43.13; 46.9). The LORD also declared 'Beside me there is no *'elohîm*', which could mean no angels (Isa.44.6; 45.5). But this was also the claim that the later Gnostics disputed, saying that

one who made this claim was the arrogant deity of the Jews.[34] In the older temple cult, Yahweh and El had been distinct, and Adam had been the wise and glorious image of Yahweh who upheld the creation, the firstborn of the sons of God. The Davidic king was his incarnation 'Immanuel, God with us', and he was known as the divine Son. The king/high priest was Adam in his garden temple, but he was also the presence of the LORD. He wore the Name on his forehead, engraved on a sacred seal. He 'was' the seal. There are traces of the original Adam in later texts: *The Life of Adam and Eve*, for example, said that Satan refused to worship Adam the image of Yahweh, and so he was thrown down from heaven and vowed revenge.[35] It is this older pattern that also underlies the New Testament, the most familiar and yet least recognised example. El and Yahweh, Father and Son, are distinct, and Yahweh incarnate, Jesus, is described as the new/second Adam (1 Cor.15.20-22, 45-49), and Adam is described as son of God (Lk.3.38). Jesus is proclaimed as the new Melchizedek.

After the changes, Yahweh and El merged, and there were no more sacral kings. Adam was only human, created from dust and brought to life with the breath of the LORD (Gen.2.7). There was no mention of being the Image. Adam was separated into male and female, the two ate from the forbidden tree and thus destroyed the creation through rejecting the tree of life, the symbol of Wisdom. They were driven from Eden to live in a world of thorns and thistles, dust and death, just as First Isaiah had prophesied: a vineyard/temple that grew only thorns and briars (Isa.5.6); a devastated land because the Lady had been rejected (Isa.6.11-12).[36]

Ezekiel's Eden

The heavenly figure in Ezekiel's Eden was not called Adam; it was a wise and glorious male-and-female like the original Adam (Gen.1.27):

> You were the signet of perfection,
> Full of wisdom,
> And perfect in beauty.
> You were in Eden, the garden of God;
> Every precious stone was your covering ...
> You were blameless in your ways
> From the day you were created ... (Ezek.28.12, 13, 15)

Ezekiel said that this wise, perfect and blameless heavenly being was cast from Eden, the mountain of God, and turned to ashes on earth because

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[34] *Apocryphon of John* CG II.1.11,13, see above, p.311.
[35] *Life of Adam and Eve* 12–16.
[36] See above, pp.93–7.

s/he had become proud and corrupted wisdom (Ezek.28.12-19). There are many problems with this passage, not least the gender of the heavenly being cast from the mountain of God, but a wise, perfect and beautiful male-female human being in Eden must have been the Adam that the Qumran community knew.

Lamentations, describing events in the time of Ezekiel, has similar imagery, but this time it was clearly the Lady who was thrown from heaven.

> How the Lord in his anger has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud!
> He has cast down from heaven to earth the *splendour* of Israel.
> (Lam.2.1)

Here, the Lady is parallel to the splendour of Israel; the Lord had set her in a cloud and cast her from heaven to earth. The word splendour, *tip'eret*, was also used of the high priests' vestments, which the priestly writer said were made 'for glory and splendour' (Exod.28.2, 40). This word, and the closely related word *p^{e}'ēr*, meaning the turban worn by a high priest (Exod.39.28; Ezek.44.18), are both priestly terms and both from the root *pā'ar*, beautify, glorify. They were used in wordplay with the word *'ēper*, ash, the consonants being *p'r* and *'pr* respectively. When the city was restored, Isaiah promised a turban instead of ash (Isa.61.3, translating literally); and when s/he sinned, Ezekiel warned that the heavenly being would be appointed for ash upon the earth (Ezek.28.18, translating literally).

The Eden story in Ezekiel 28.12-19, which now appears as Ezekiel's oracle against the king of Tyre, has an interesting history, as does its companion piece (Ezek.28.1-10), his oracle against the prince of Tyre. The two must be considered together. The Lxx uses *archōn*, ruler, in each case. The oracle against the prince uses the word *nāgîd*, the conspicuous or prominent one, but elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures this word was used only for a *Hebrew* king, prince, temple official or high priest. This is the only example of its being used of a foreign ruler (Ezek.28.2).[37] There is therefore a suspicion that the original oracle was not about a *foreign* ruler, especially as his punishment was to die the death of the uncircumcised, v.10. For a foreign ruler, this would have been his expected fate.

A key word in both oracles is 'Tyre'. In the Palaeo-Hebrew of Ezekiel's time, the words for Tyre and for Zion look very different, but in the second temple Hebrew script used when the correcting scribes were at work, Tyre and Zion look very similar: *ṣôr*, Tyre, and *ṣiyyôn*, Zion, [written *ṣwr*, and *ṣywr*, and bearing in mind that '*r*' and the form of '*n*' at the end of the word can be similar]. It is possible that Ezekiel's two oracles were originally addressed to the ruler of Zion, but it is more likely that *ṣôr*, 'Tyre' should be read as the word which is identical in written form that means the heavenly

[37] See F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962 edn, pp.617–8.

reality, *ṣûr*, the Form beyond the earthly reality of any person or thing. The two creations – the visible and the invisible – were fundamental to the temple world view, and the Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath* sacrifice show there was very specialised vocabulary to describe the state of being in the holy of holies: 'a *d*[e]*mût* of a glorious spirit luminous like goldwork'; and 'Forms', *ṣûrôt*, – 'Forms' of the *'*[e]*lohîm*, 'Forms' of the glory and 'Forms' of luminous spirits around the throne.[38] Ezekiel made this distinction in his visions of the chariot throne, using the words *d*[e]*mût* and *mar'eh*, but he used the word *ṣûr* in his description of the ideal temple (Ezek.43.10).[39] It may be that in these oracles Ezekiel was using very precise language, addressing the engraving [the Form] of the prince and the king. The precise meaning of these terms is unknown; if it was clear how *d*[e]*mût* related to *ṣûr*, for example, it would be possible to understand much more about Ezekiel and the world of the first temple.

Then there is wordplay throughout both oracles, mainly around *ḥll*. This could be from the root *ḥll*, meaning bore, pierce, defile or pollute, and untie or loosen;[40] or it could be a form of the root *ḥwl*, meaning 'whirl', 'writhe', 'give birth to', or be 'firm/strong', with the derived noun *ḥyl* meaning anguish or birth, when pronounced *ḥîl*, and strength or wealth when pronounced *ḥayil*. The *po'lel/po'lal* forms of this verb are very similar to parts of the verb *ḥll*, and so make for effective wordplay. The meaning 'give birth to' is particularly significant, and even though it does not appear with this meaning in Ezekiel 28, it would have been known to those who heard the oracles. *This verb was used to describe the origin of Wisdom:*

> Ages ago I was set up,
> At the first, before the beginnning of the earth.
> When there were no depths, I was *brought forth* ...
> Before the hills I was *brought forth* ... (Prov.8.23-25)

The difficult text of Psalm 110 has this word to describe the time when the king became the divine son: either 'the day of your strength' or 'the day of your birth' (Ps.110.3; 'birth' in NEB). In Ezekiel's time, the verb was used of Sarah *giving birth* (Isa.51.2) and also of the origin of Adam, when Eliphaz asked Job: 'Are you the first Adam that was born, or were you *brought forth* before the hills?' (Job 15.7, my translation). In Proverbs, the one brought forth before the hills was Wisdom, and here in Job she is paired with Adam, as examples of those who possessed the divine wisdom from the beginning. Birth in the holy of holies was also implied in Ezekiel's oracles, as we shall see. There are also the two meanings of *lēb*: heart/mind, and heart/midst;

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[38] These examples are from 4Q 405.19. G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, London: Penguin, 1997, p.328, translates this word 'figures'.
[39] See above, p.289.
[40] Thus BDB, op.cit., n.37, p.320.

the wordplay on *yrd*, to descend, and *rdh*, to have dominion; the two very similar words from the same root *rākāl*, trade, and *rākîl*, slander; and the noun 'pit' *šḥt*, from the verb [*šwḥ*] meaning 'sink down', looks exactly the same as the verb *šḥt*, meaning pervert or corrupt.

The first oracle (Ezek.28.2-10) was addressed to the prince, *nāgîd*, brought down because his heart/mind had become proud and he had said 'I am God, *'ēl*, and I dwell in the dwelling of the *'elohîm*, in the heart/midst of the seas,' v.2. The second oracle was addressed to the king, who had been set in Eden, the mountain garden of *'elohîm*. They are addressed to the same person, and they are set in the same place; both describe the sacral king in the holy of holies. The heart of the seas could have described the location of Tyre, but there was also a 'sea' that surrounded the heavenly throne. This was temple tradition, still known at the end of the second temple period. John saw a sea of glass like crystal before the throne (Rev.4.6; 15.2), and in a Jewish story told at that time, Adam was driven out of the garden, and the archangel Michael had to freeze the waters around Paradise so that he could walk over.[41] From the same period there is a description of Levi summoned to heaven by an angel of the LORD; he found himself first on a high mountain, and as he entered the first heaven, he found 'much water suspended'.[42] The belief was ancient and is found in Genesis 1: the firmament that separated heaven from earth, represented by the veil that separated the holy of holies from the great hall of the temple, was set up to 'separate the waters that were under the firmament from the waters that were above the firmament' (Gen.1.7). An early psalm depicts the LORD enthroned over the flood as king (Ps.29.10), and Psalm 93 says that the world and the throne have been established because the LORD is mightier than the floods and the waters. Another early poem which in its present context describes the Exodus [but with no mention of Sinai] probably originated in the temple experience of crossing hostile waters to reach the security of the LORD's throne on his holy mountain.

> Thou wilt bring them in and plant them on thy holy mountain,
> The place O LORD which thou hast made for thy abode,
> The sanctuary O LORD which thy hands have established.
> The LORD will reign for ever and ever. (Exod.15.17-18)

Isaiah described the waters of the throne in Zion:

> But there the LORD in majesty will be for us
> A place of broad rivers and streams

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[41] *Life of Adam and Eve* 29.3.
[42] *Testament of Levi* 2.7.

Where no galley with oars can go,
Nor stately ship can pass. (Isa.33.21)

Daniel's night-vision of the Man going up with clouds to the throne also implies that the throne was set amidst the 'great sea' (Dan.7.2), as does the similar vision of 'Ezra', when he saw a man rising from the heart of the sea and going with clouds up to heaven (2 Esd.13.1-4). The midst of the sea was not necessarily Tyre.

It is likely that Ezekiel's proud prince on a divine throne in the heart of the seas, v.2, and the figure in the second oracle set on the holy mountain, v.14, were both the sacral king in Zion, described as the son of the LORD:

I have set my king on Zion, my holy mountain ...
You are my son, today I have begotten you. (Ps.2.6, 7, my translation)

Eden as the mountain where the anointed king reigned is implied in Isaiah 11: the Spirit of the LORD would rest on a Davidic prince – 'a shoot from the stump of Jesse' – and give him wisdom; then the creation would be in harmony and the holy mountain at peace (Isa.11.1-9). This introduces the second detail about the ruler of 'Tyre' in both oracles: s/he was wise. The prince was wise, and no secret was hidden from him, v.3; the king was full of wisdom, v.12. The wisdom had been used to trade [or was it to slander?], vv.5, 16, and the resulting wealth/strength made the prince wealthy/strong, the king violent, v.16. The LORD's word to the prince was: 'Your heart/mind became proud because of your wealth/strength' (Ezek.28.5, my translation); and he considered himself as wise as the *'elohîm*. According to the Genesis storyteller, this was the temptation that the snake offered the human pair (Ezek.28.6; cf. Gen.3.5): the LORD had forbidden the tree of knowledge of good and evil because it would make them like the *'elohîm*. By implication, the proud prince had eaten from this tree, and his original wisdom had been corrupted by pride.

The proud prince bears a striking resemblance to the Adam of Genesis 2–3 who fell, and he was reminded twice that he was 'Adam and not El' vv.2, 9, translating literally. Was this prompted by the crisis of coalescence? If Yahweh had been proclaimed as El, then what happened to the status of the sacral king who had been Yahweh? He was not El, so in what sense was he the divine presence, if at all?

The prince had gained wealth/strength, *ḥîl*, from his wisdom, vv.4, 5, therefore [there was a logical connection emphasised by the wordplay] strangers would defile, *ḥll*, his splendour, v.7, he would die the death of the pierced/defiled, *ḥll*, v.8, and would he still claim to be a god to those who pierced/defiled him, v.9? There are also the two meanings of *lēb*: heart/mind, and heart/midst. The prince was enthroned in the midst of the seas, v.2, and claimed to have the heart/mind of the *'elohîm*, v.2. His heart/mind became proud, v.5, and so he would die in the heart/midst of the seas, v.8. And

there is wordplay on *rdh*, to have dominion and *yrd*, to descend: Adam had been set to *have dominion* over the creation (Gen.1.28) whereas his enemies would cause the prince to *descend* to the Pit, v.8. The noun 'Pit' *šḥt*, from the verb meaning sink down, looks exactly the same as the verb *šḥt*, meaning pervert or corrupt.

The possibility that the proud prince of Ezekiel's first oracle against 'Tyre' was the sacral king in Zion, is strengthened by the second oracle (Ezek.28.12-19), addressed to the king of 'Tyre'. S/he was a male-female heavenly being in the garden of Eden, a cherub dressed, according to the Lxx of this passage, in the 12 jewels of the Jerusalem high priest, exactly as set out in Exodus 28.17-20. In the Hebrew, the text is different and shorter, omitting some of the high priest's jewels, which raises the question: did the translator of the Lxx, produced in Egypt, preserve the original form of this text, or did s/he introduce the alien idea of the king of Tyre as a heavenly figure who was identical to the Jerusalem high priest? Or is the present Hebrew text the work of the correcting scribes, who removed an unflattering reference to the high priesthood that furthermore linked it to a female figure? Ben Sira knew that Wisdom herself had ministered in the holy tabernacle, and it was later said that the jewelled figure was Eve on her wedding day.[43]

The Hebrew of Ezekiel 28.14 begins *'t krwb*. The 'cherub', *krwb*, is not in dispute, but the first two letters could be read three ways: as a sign of the accusative case or as the preposition 'with', both pronounced *'et*; or as the feminine form 'you', pronounced *'att*. The Lxx has 'with the cherub', and the Syriac too, presumably the cherub who barred the way back into Eden and to the tree of life (Gen.3.24). The RSV also has 'with ... a cherub ...' but the AV has 'Thou art the ... cherub', which is what the Hebrew requires. The Masoretic pointing gives *'att*, a second person singular masculine pronoun, which would normally be written *'attāh*. There are only two other examples of *'att* as a masculine form (Num.11.15 and Deut.5.27), which means that it was very rare. The translators of the Lxx and the Syriac did not recognise it and opted for *'et*, meaning 'with'. In his study of this word, Barr observed: 'The Masoretic vocalization is credible only if it rested on a phonic tradition of the word as *'att*.'[44] In other words, later scholars remembered that the word had to be pronounced that way. It was a second person pronoun, a feminine form that was very rarely used as a masculine form. *Or maybe it had been a feminine form*. Jerome confirms this. Both here in verse 14 and also in verse 16, he knew that the Hebrew was a second person form: 'Tu cherub', v.14, and 'O cherub', v.16. Jerome knew the Lxx and Symmachus' translation, both of which understood the word to mean 'with', but he also worked with Jewish scholars, and so he must have had a reason for rejecting

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[43] *Genesis Rabbah* XVIII.1, attributed to R. Hama who was teaching in Palestine in the late third century CE.

[44] J. Barr, 'Thou art the Cherub', in *Priests, Prophets and Scribes*, ed. E. Ulrich, J. W. Wright, R. P. Carroll, P. R. Davies, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1982, pp.213–23, p.217.

the Greek translation 'with the cherub' in favour of the Hebrew, even though the Hebrew was a problem. The Targum of Ezekiel also understood that this was addressed to the cherub, albeit understanding the cherub here as the king of Tyre.

The rest of the text is also ambiguous as to the gender of the cherub. Since the cherub is addressed, second person forms of both nouns and verbs are used, ending with *kaph* or *tau*, and these can all be pointed as masculine or feminine without affecting the consonantal text, although there are regular masculine forms in verses 12 and 15: 'you shall say to *him* ... *you* were ...' and '*you* were blameless ...' This ambiguity would only be of passing interest were there not a similar situation in Ezekiel 1 and 10, the chariot visions, where there is also gender ambiguity. What Ezekiel described leaving the mountain of God in chapter 28 and leaving the temple in chapter 10 – in effect the same thing – was a being described with both masculine and feminine forms.

The cherub was 'the seal/sealer'[45] of proportion', *toknît* – a possibility to which we shall return – or perhaps the seal/sealer of the pattern, *tabnît*, since the two words look similar in second temple Hebrew script. Ezekiel used both words/ideas elsewhere. If the cherub was the seal of the *tabnît*, pattern, this implies that the cherub guaranteed the correct pattern. The fiery being who carried Ezekiel to Jerusalem put forth 'the *tabnît* of a hand', translated 'the form of a hand' (Ezek.8.3) and the cherubim of the throne had the *tabnît* of a human hand under their wings (Ezek.10.8).[46] If the cherub had been the seal of the pattern this could mean either that the cherub had to join the pattern together, or to be imprinted as the pattern. The Targum read the word as *tabnît*, 'a structural pattern, like the original structural mold', meaning that the cherub was like the primal Adam.[47] Rabbinic texts also read Ezekiel's Eden as the story of Adam: the Holy One made canopies for him there;[48] and Adam was the 'seal most accurate, full of beauty and perfect in Eden the garden of God'.[49]

Now a seal implies joining together, and this was the role of Wisdom (Lxx Prov.8.30), but also the role of the Name, as in the Prayer of Manasseh, where the Name was the seal of creation (Pr.Man.3). The high priest wore the Name and uttered the Name when the creation was renewed on the day of atonement, sealing the work of renewal; and it was the high priestly role of sealing together that appeared in Paul's decriptions of the role of Jesus: 'to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth' (Eph.1.10);

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[45] The word could be read as the noun *ḥotam*, seal, or the participle *ḥotem*, sealer. This does not affect the meaning.

[46] He also saw the *form* of the creeping and loathsome things in the temple, Ezek.10.8, although the Lxx omits the word.

[47] Thus S. H. Lewey, *The Targum of Ezekiel*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987, ad loc.

[48] Babylonian Talmud *Baba Bathra* 75a.

[49] *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 7.17.1.

and 'he is before all things, and in him all things hold together' (Col.1.17). The gender ambiguity – feminine Wisdom or the masculine high priest – was known to the early Christians. When John received letters from the risen LORD to send to the seven churches, in the seventh letter the LORD described himself as Wisdom: 'the Amen [read Hebrew 'a*mon*, as in Prov.8.30, which became *harmozousa*, she who joins together, Lxx Prov.8.30], the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation' (Rev.3.14).[50] Others understood that the cherub was the seal to imprint the pattern. Thus Lxx has *aposphragisma omoiōseōs*, 'the seal impression of the likeness', implying that the king was the likeness, as was Adam. Aquila has *sphragis etoimasiōn*, the seal of the things prepared, that is, the great archetype.

Ezekiel's vision of the future temple gives a context for both possibilities: *tbnt*, pattern, but also *tknt*, the seal of measurement, perhaps meaning the seal of proportion. Measurements were important in the temple world view: the correct measurements for the temple revealed the correct ordering of both creation and human society. When the measuring angel (Ezek.40.3-4) showed Ezekiel the plan for the temple, he said:

> Now, son of man, tell the house of Israel about the house [i.e. the temple] so that they may be ashamed of their deviations [which also means iniquities] and may measure the plan, *tbnt*. And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, cause them to know the form, *ṣwr*, of the house and its arrangement, its ways out and ways in, and all its forms and all its statutes; and all its forms and all its laws. And write them before their eyes that they may keep/preserve all its form and all its statutes, and do them. (Ezek.43.10, translating literally)

These statutes were the 'engraved things' of the older covenant,[51] and Ezekiel was shown their heavenly archetypes, the Forms. The cherub in Eden could have been the guardian and guarantor of these measurements, their seal, and so the seal of the plan. Philo remembered that the Logos of God was the original seal, *sphragis*, the first principle, the archetypal idea, and the pre-measurerer, *prometrētēs*, of all things.[52] Later Merkavah texts say that R. Akiba, who lived a generation after Philo, stood before the heavenly throne and was then told to go down and teach the 'measurement', *middāh*, he had learned, which means the mystery that he had learned.[53] The mysteries of the temple and of the creation it represented were its measurements. Either of these meanings sets the cherub in the world from which Pythagoras learned about the Forms and numbers of the invisible creation.

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[50] For detail see my *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000, pp.112–13.

[51] See above, p.168.

[52] Philo, *Questions on Genesis* I.4

[53] *Merkavah Rabbah* # 686, quoted in P. Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992, p.119.

Ezekiel's cherub in Eden had been created full of wisdom and perfect in beauty (Ezek.28.12), presumably the source of Philo's explanation, that 'cherub' meant *epignōsis kai epistēmē pollē*, 'knowledge and much science', and *epistēmē plousia kai kechumenē*, 'knowledge abundant and poured out'.[54] Again, this is not said of Adam in Genesis, but that picture of Adam was implicit in the hopes of the Qumran community: to regain the glory of Adam and the knowledge of the Most High. Since the next verse describes the cherub wearing the breastplate of the high priest, the wisdom and perfect beauty may be a reference to the other vestments. All the Targums mention Adam's glorious garments: Targum *Neofiti*, for example, says the human pair had 'garments of glory for their flesh', and later Jewish tradition remembered that they had been garments of light: 'In Rabbi Meir's Torah it was found written "Garments of light"; this refers to Adam's garments.'[55] The *Apocalypse of Moses* has a longer version of the Eden story, told by Adam himself: 'At that very moment my eyes were opened and I knew I was naked of the righteousness with which I had been clothed. And I wept and said [to the snake] "Why have you done this to me, that I have been estranged from the glory with which I was clothed".'[56] The vestments of the high priest symbolised his righteousness. When Enoch was anointed and vested as he stood before the throne, he was given the garments of [the LORD's] glory,[57] presumably cut from the robe of glory that Isaiah had seen filling the whole earth (Isa.6.1-3). Centuries later, tradition remembered that the high priestly garments were 'emanations of the supernal mysteries, and made after the supernal pattern, such that they are called "residual garments", (*bigde ha-s'rad*), inasmuch as they were made of what has been left over of the supernal robes ...'[58] 'Adam in the Garden of Eden was attired in supernal raiment, of celestial radiancy.'[59]

The vestments also symbolised wisdom. Ben Sira advised his 'son' to seek Wisdom and then wear her like the vestments of the high priest:

> Her yoke [LXX Upon her] is a golden ornament,
> And her bonds are a cord of blue.
> You will wear her like a garment of glory
> And put her round you like a crown of gladness. (Ben Sira 6.30-31; cf. Exod.28.36-37)

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[54] Philo, *Moses* II.97 and *Questions on Exodus* II.62, explaining the cherubim on the ark.
[55] *Genesis Rabbah* XX.12. This was wordplay on the similar Hebrew words for light, *'ōr*, and skin, *'ōr.*
[56] *Apocalypse of Moses*, 20.2.
[57] *2 Enoch* 22.8.
[58] *Zohar Exodus* 229b, tr. M. Simon and P. Levertoff, London: Soncino Press, 5 vols, 1984, vol.4, p.280.
[59] Ibid., p.281.

This must be why an early Christian text had Wisdom calling to the foolish ones and offering them her gift of understanding:

> I am giving you a high-priestly garment which is woven from every wisdom ... Clothe yourself with wisdom like a robe, put knowledge upon you like a crown, and be seated upon a throne of perception ... Return, my son, to your divine nature ... Return, my son, to your first Father God, and Wisdom your Mother from whom you came into being.[60]

'Woven from every wisdom' is not a biblical concept, but it may be implicit in the technical term used to describe the fabric of the high priest's vestment: it was *maʿᵃśeh ḥōšēb* translated 'cunning work' or 'skilfully worked' (Exod.28.6, AV, RSV; there are many examples), but the root word means 'think', 'devise' or 'invent'. It was the evil 'thoughts', another word from this root, that brought corruption to the land before Noah's flood (Gen.6.5), and the high priest in a vestment of 'thinking work' could well have had a double meaning.

The cherub had been set on the holy mountain of God/the *ʾᵉlohîm*, earlier named as Eden, (Ezek.28.13, 14), and had walked to and fro in the midst of the stones of fire. This is also how Ezekiel described whoever/whatever was at the heart of the chariot throne, walking around, *hlk*,[61] among the torches or perhaps within the living creatures. In the garden of Eden, the cherub had walked about in the midst of the *stones* of fire, a phrase that looks very like sons of fire: stone is *ʾeben*, son is *bēn*.[62] The Lxx read the verb 'walk around' as *yld*, to bear or beget, and so has 'You were *born* in the midst of the stones of fire', v.14, and 'the cherub drove you out from the midst of the stones of fire', v.16. This is Psalm 110 again, where the almost impenetrable v.3 has the human transformed on the day of his birth into a Melchizedek figure, 'upon the holy mountains' (RSV, JB), 'in the beauties of holiness' (AV), or 'resplendent/apparelled in holiness' (NEB). Another possibility is that the letters in question, *bhdry qdš[m]*, mean 'in the glories of the holy ones', and these would be the 'sons of fire'. Whatever the detail, the transformation took place in the fiery cube that was the holy of holies, and the Lxx of Ezekiel 28 may have preserved a valuable link between Ezekiel's oracle, Genesis 2–3 and the royal cult. The ruler was born in the fiery place and would be driven from it.

Later Christian tradition said that Adam came down the holy mountain when he left Eden. Ephrem (died 373 CE), in his *Hymns on Paradise* knew

[60] *The Teaching of Silvanus* CG VII.4.89-91.
[61] In each case, a form of the hithpaʿel of *hlk*.
[62] Another possible link is the rare word *ʾoben*, written in the same way as *ʾeben*, meaning a wheel or disc: the cherub walking in the midst of the wheels of fire.

that Paradise was on a mountain top, and he [unconsciously?] identified this mountain of Eden and the temple, comparing the holy of holies to the summit. Adam came down from Paradise and then lived on the lower slopes.[63] There is more detail in the Syriac *Book of the Cave of Treasures*: 'Adam and Eve were in Paradise, and clothed with glory and shining with praise for three hours. Now this Paradise was situated on a range of high hills ...'[64] The traditional ikon of the Nativity also depicts Mary and the Child in a cave towards the summit of a mountain, a memory of the temple as a mountain and the holy of holies as the cave. At first sight, these might seem only a later conflation of Ezekiel 28, where the one expelled is not called Adam, and Genesis 2–3, where Eden is not on a mountain. But 'ancient Mesopotamian cultures themselves have left us no comparable myth involving a mountain as the home of primeval man'[65] and so Ezekiel's mountain-top Eden must be sought among the holy mountains of the indigenous temple tradition. Enoch, who preserved this tradition, did describe a great mountain of precious stones, set within six smaller mountains, perhaps the range of mountains described in the *Cave of Treasures*. On the summit of the highest mountain was the throne of the Great Holy One, surrounded by trees, and in their midst was a huge fragrant tree, destined to return to the temple after the great judgement. Although not named at this point in *1 Enoch*, the tree was the tree of life.[66] This is part of the earliest stratum of *1 Enoch*, whose content – if not in this precise form – was known to First Isaiah and so, presumably, to Ezekiel.

With all these texts, it is important to bear in mind that they do not give every detail on every occasion. There would have been a tradition of hearing as well as a tradition of reading, and just occasionally, the tradition of hearing can be glimpsed in the expanded texts that became the Targums. Ezekiel may well have known about a throne in the mountain garden of Eden, especially as he saw it leaving the temple. The Genesis storyteller did not mention the temple, but he implied that his Eden was, or had been, the temple.[67] The tradition of hearing accounts for some of the later retelling of the Eden stories, where previously unknown details i.e. unwritten details, are not necessarily innovations.

Ezekiel's original oracle about the cherub set in the mountain garden of Eden is likely to have addressed the cherub, 'Thou art the anointed cherub ...' (Ezek.28.14, AV). The cherub was set as 'an anointed guardian' [thus RSV];

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[63] Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise*, 1.10. ET S. Brock, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990.
[64] E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* I, London: Religious Tract Society 1927, p.60.
[65] R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, p.307.
[66] *1 Enoch* 24–25. We shall return to the mystery of Enoch's trees, in volume 2.
[67] See below, p.368.

'the anointed one that covereth' [thus AV]; 'stretched out and protecting' *extentus et protegens* [Jerome];[68] but there are no equivalent words in the Lxx. The Hebrew words are *mimšaḥ hasôkēk*, and the consonants *mmšḥ* were considered by RSV and AV to mean 'anointed', reading as a *pu'al* participle. Jerome's translation implies another meaning for *mmšḥ*, 'stretched out', which is mentioned in the *Gospel of Philip*: 'Messiah has two meanings, both 'the Christ' and 'the measured'.[69] Now *mšḥ* does mean 'measure' in Aramaic, and this wordplay may be what Philo knew when he said that the Logos was the seal and the 'pre-measurer'.[70] Such a 'stretched out' cherub would have been like the cherubim who stretched out their wings from wall to wall across the holy of holies (1 Kgs 6.27).

Since Ezekiel's cherub was the guardian, *hasôkēk*, and the seal of the pattern/proportion, we should expect an active role, the measur*er*, rather than the measur*ed*, and thus read *mmšḥ* as *pi'el* rather than *pu'al*. Consistency would then require that the guardian cherub was not the anoint*ed* but the anoint*er*, the one who poured out the oil which conferred 'most holiness' to whatever it touched. The anointing oil was the only means by which 'most holiness' that is, active, contagious holiness could be imparted. Anything anointed could impart 'holiness', the passive state, but only the oil could confer 'most holiness', the power to make holy. In Exodus, it was Moses who poured out the oil that conferred 'most holiness' on the tabernacle vessels and even on the high priests (Exod.30.22-33). This was not the role of the Aaronite high priests, since they too were recipients. In this post-exilic account of consecrating the most holy things and the most holy ones, whom did Moses represent and replace? The cherub who was driven from Eden who had the power to confer 'most holiness'? Daniel's prophecy about anointing the Most Holy person/things implies the restoration of both the oil and the anointer (Dan.9.24), and in the Hebrew Scriptures, the only glimpse of a banished anointer is in Proverbs. It was Wisdom, because the oil, as we shall see, was her sacrament.[71]

Wisdom spoke out to those who had banished her, calling from the 'outside', from the wide spaces, from – the next word is unknown, possibly walls[72] – and from the entrance of the city gates (Prov.1.20-21, my literal translation). Her name here has the plural form, 'Wisdoms', a sign of majesty or divinity, and she called out to those who had rejected her, the *scoffers* and those who hated knowledge. She longed to pour out her Spirit on them and teach them (Prov.1.23; the Hebrew has *Spirit*), and she warned them of the disaster that would come because they had despised her. The places from

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[68] There are cherubs with outstretched wings, but using a different verb, in 1 Kgs 6.27, and in Pss.17.8; 36.7-9; 57.1; 61.4; 63.7; 91.4.
[69] *Gospel of Philip* CG II.3.62.
[70] See above, pp.348–9.
[71] See volume 2.
[72] The Hebrew *hmywt* is obscure, but the Lxx read *hmwt*, 'walls'.

which Wisdom called to her city are very similar to the stages by which Ezekiel saw the Glory leave the temple (Ezek.10.4, 18-19): it went out to the threshold [‘outside’], then to the court [‘the open spaces’], then to the eastern gate in the temple walls [the unknown word and the gates].

Ezekiel described the corrupted cherub as a corruption of the original Adam. Each characteristic of the glorious Adam was reversed or destroyed.

- The cherub was created as the seal; but because of corruption, the seal was loosened/defiled from the mountain of the *ʾᵉlohîm* (Ezek.28.16, translating literally).
- The original Adam was created to *fill* the earth with knowledge or with glory; the cherub was created full of wisdom but s/he became *filled* with violence.
- The original Adam was created to be great, but the cherub's *greatness* had become greatness in trade and in iniquities (Ezek.28.12, 18).
- Instead of consecrating the holy places, the cherub had defiled them (Ezek.28.18).
- Instead of being glorious, from the root *pāʾar*, glorify, [later read as from *pārāh*, be fruitful], the cherub would become *ʾēper*, ash.
- And whereas Wisdom had proclaimed: ‘I was brought forth’, *ḥôlaltî* (Prov.8.24, 25, a form of *ḥwl* that looks like *ḥll*); the cherub would have said an almost identical word, ‘I was profaned/destroyed’, *ḥullaltî.*[73]

The cherub was guilty of using wisdom to acquire wealth and of polluting the holy places, exactly those sins of which the ‘later’ priests were accused. The Hebrew says ‘You profaned your sanctuaries’, implying the the cherub was divine, but ‘my sanctuary’ has been proposed as a possible emendation of the text,[74] thus echoing the vision of the man in linen who had to purge ‘my sanctuary’ of corruption (Ezek.9.6). The Lxx has ‘your sanctuaries’ and so the present Hebrew is probably correct, and the cherub was a divine being with a sanctuary.

The *Damascus Document*, written by those who considered themselves the true priests, those whom Ezekiel called ‘the sons of Zadok who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from me’ (Ezek.44.15), described the three sins of the age of wrath as ‘the three nets of Belial’: fornication, riches and profanation of the temple, and attributed this saying to Levi.[75] The source of this quotation was the *Testament of Levi* which, in its turn, quoted from a [now lost] writing of Enoch. In other words, the *Testament of Levi* gives the details of the priesthood that *1 Enoch*

[73] This form is not actually found in the Hebrew Bible, but shows the wordplay.
[74] Thus BHS, op.cit., n.37, ad loc.
[75] *Damascus Document* IV.

describes as apostate.[76] 'You will bring down a curse on our nation, because you want to destroy the light of the Law ... You will plunder the LORD's offerings ... You will teach the LORD's commands out of greed for gain ... You will be inflated with pride over your priesthood.'[77] In their present form, the *Damascus Document* and the *Testament of Levi* reflect the situation in the second century BCE, but the three nets of Belial could well have been traditional, interpreted in these texts for their second century situation. The post-Josianic priests were accused of all three sins: fornication – used to describe their temple cult after they had abandoned Wisdom and followed what Proverbs called 'the strange woman, the foreign woman' (Prov.2.16);[78] riches, which the cherub had acquired through the mis-use of wisdom; which resulted in pride and the pollution of the temple. The sins of Ezekiel's cherub high priest were not forgotten.

Fragments of the older stories survived in the Old Testament, for example in difficult texts that may have been obscured by the correcting scribes, and in the variant translations found in the Lxx. Ezekiel's proud prince was known to the Second Isaiah, or rather, to those who transmitted his words. The present Hebrew text is:

> Your first father sinned,
> And your mediators, *m*ᵉ*lîṣîm*, transgressed against me.
> Therefore I profaned, *ḥll*, the princes of the sanctuary,
> I delivered Jacob to utter destruction
> And Israel to reviling. (Isa.43.27-28)

The Greek is:

> Your former/leading fathers and your rulers acted lawlessly against me,
> And your rulers defiled my holy things/sanctuaries.
> And I gave Jacob over to destruction
> And Israel to reproach. (Lxx Isa.43.27-28, my translation)

Was the original sinner only one father – Adam, as in the Hebrew – or were they many fathers, their former rulers – as in the Lxx? The Greek suggests that the lawless ones were a group of former rulers who defiled the holy things or holy places, and this is why the nation was destroyed. In other words, the Lxx translators could have been blaming Josiah's generation, as did their ancestors, the refugees in Egypt (Jer.44.18). The Hebrew, on the other hand, seems to blame Adam, the first father, and then their *m*ᵉ*lîṣîm*, which could mean 'scorners', 'interpreters' or 'intermediaries', the many meanings of the verb *lîṣ*. Jeremiah condemned such people in his time: they

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[76] *1 Enoch* 93.9.
[77] *Testament of Levi* 4.4-7.
[78] See above, pp.66–7, and volume 2.

claimed to be wise, yet they had falsified the law of the LORD, rejected his word, and what was wise about that? (Jer.8.8-9). They were interpreters and scoffers. He too prophesied that they would bring disaster. The Hebrew seems to emphasise a fallen individual, which may reflect Ezekiel's oracles against the proud prince and king. No conclusion is possible, but such variety in a text does show that the cause of the disaster to the temple and the nation was being blamed on a lawless generation or on the fallen Adam – or whoever Adam 'was' at the time of the disaster.

The verb *lîṣ*, in the sense scoff, is significant because it is characteristic of wisdom literature and used of those who scoff at wisdom or choose the opposite way: Wisdom called out to the simple ones, the scoffers and those who hated knowledge, warning them where their attitude would lead, to 'eating the fruit of their own way', which is an interesting phrase in the light of the Genesis Eden story (Prov.1.22-31). The wise and the scoffers were contrasted (Prov.9.12; 13.1); a scoffer was proud and arrogant (Prov.21.24); a scoffer was an abomination (Prov.24.9). Most of the examples of the word are in Proverbs, although the Psalter opens by contrasting the man who avoids the wicked, sinners and scoffers, comparing him to a tree planted by water, which bears fruit and whose leaves do not wither – another interesting image, especially as such a man is *'ašrey*, happy/blessed/walking a straight path, and the wordplay here is with Ashratah, the Lady (Ps.1.1-3).

It was because of scoffers, said Second Isaiah, that the LORD 'profaned' something/someone. The verb is *ḥll*, the keyword pierce/profane in Ezekiel 28, but the object(s) of the profanation are no longer clear in the Hebrew. In the LXX, the rulers profaned the holy things/place and thus brought destruction on the land, but the Hebrew could have been: 'I profaned/pierced my prince, my holy one' or 'I profaned the princes of the sanctuary'. A prophecy in Daniel looked forward to this situation being reversed, when Gabriel revealed to Daniel the time of the restoration.

> Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your holy city,
> *to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin*, and to atone for iniquity,
> to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. (Dan.9.24, with the line divisions of BHS)

There are text problems with the first words in the second line, but a possible translation is that after 490 years there would be a great day of atonement: 'to confine the transgressor/transgression, to seal up/put an end to sin' (translating literally), and then clear text 'to atone for iniquity'. The next line is: 'To bring in the righteousness/*Righteous One* of eternity; to fulfil the vision and the prophet, i.e. prophecy; and to *anoint* a most holy place or a *Most Holy One*' (translating literally). Peter's sermon in Solomon's

porch[79] shows how the early Christians understood these words: The people of Jerusalem had denied the *Holy and Righteous One*, and the *Anointed One* would emerge from heaven to bring renewal when the prophecies were fulfilled (Acts 3.14, 18-21).

Ezekiel's cherub in the mountain garden of Eden was the original Adam high priest, male-and-female as in Genesis 1.27. The corruption, fall and destruction of the cherub was Ezekiel's explanation of the destruction of the temple and its priesthood because its heavenly *ṣûr* no longer replicated its Form. As with the fallen angels, the system was fractured. The Forms of the holy of holies – the Adam figure on the chariot throne – left the temple, and Ezekiel saw their *mar'eh*, appearance, as they departed. When there was no longer a heavenly reality to sustain the earthly counterpart, it ceased to exist, and so the cherub fell to become ashes on the earth.

There is a striking illustration of this way of temple-thinking in the letter to the church at Ephesus, given by the LORD to his prophet John. Centuries after Ezekiel, there is the same pattern. John envisaged three stages, three aspects of the one identity/reality: a heavenly symbol – the lampstand; then its angel figure; and then a human bishop. The LORD, speaking through his prophet John, warned the bishop of Ephesus that he had fallen from his original state, but he spoke to the bishop's heavenly counterpart, his angel, who was himself represented by a lampstand in heaven:

> To the angel of the church in Ephesus write ...
> Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent ...
> To him who conquers, I will grant of eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God. (Rev.2.1, 5, 7)

Substitute Ezekiel for John as the LORD's prophet; Adam on the the chariot throne for the lampstand; the cherub for the angel; the royal high priest for the bishop, and the picture is exactly that in Ezekiel. The angel/bishop would lose his position if his lampstand was removed. In Ezekiel, when Adam on the chariot throne left the temple, the cherub/king lost his position. The same sanction applied: for John, those who remained true would be granted access to the tree of life; for the Genesis writer – and Ezekiel must have known this too – those who failed lost access to the tree of life.

The fate of the cherub and the reason for it are so vividly described that it was probably drawn from life.

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[79] The next major gathering after Pentecost would have been the day of atonement, so this is the likely context for the sermon.

You profaned, *ḥll*, your sanctuaries,
so I brought forth fire from the midst of you;
it consumed you,
and I turned you to ashes upon the earth
in the sight of all who saw you.
All who know you among the peoples
Are appalled at you;
You have come to a dreadful end
And shall be no more for ever. (Ezek.28.18-19)

This seems like the public burning of the Asherah and the chariot(s) of the sun in the time of Josiah. The Asherah was dragged from the temple, burned by the Kidron, beaten to dust and scattered on common graves; the chariot(s)[80] of the sun were burned (2 Kgs 23.6, 11). Just as the sacred symbols had been dishonoured and burned, so too the corrupted heavenly *ṣûr* would be dishonoured and burned. The horror of the destruction and humiliation was reflected in Ezekiel's bitter words.

But who was the pierced/profaned one? 'I cast you as a profaned/pierced thing from the mountain of God ... from the midst of the stones of fire' (Ezek.28.16). Josiah? The D writer says little about Josiah's death, except that he was killed in a battle with the Egyptians at Megiddo (2 Kgs 23.29-30); but the Chronicler described a foolhardy king who ignored advice not to engage the Egyptian army. Even though he went into battle in disguise, the archers shot him and he was killed, *pierced* by an arrow (2 Chron.35.20-24). Why did the D writer not mention the arrow? Perhaps because Huldah's prophecy of a peaceful death for a penitent king had not been fulfilled (2 Kgs 22.18-20); or perhaps it was the manner of his death. The sacral king who had been 'born' in the holy of holies, among the sons of fire, had been pierced/defiled and, like the proud ruler of 'Tyre' had died by the hand of foreigners and was profaned/pierced from the holy mountain.

After the death of Josiah there was the dynastic turmoil of the last days of Jerusalem: the people of the land took Josiah's son Jehoahaz and made him king, but the Pharaoh deposed him and took him to Egypt (2 Chron.36.1-3). Pharoah made Jehoahaz's brother Eliakim king and changed his name to Jehoiakim (2 Chron.36.4-8). Nebuchadnezzar came against him, captured him and took him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar made Jehoiakim's young son Jehoiachin king, but he too was taken to Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem for the first time in 597 BCE. Jehoiakim's brother Mattaniah was then made king and his name was changed to Zedekiah, but he rebelled and so the Babylonians returned to destroy Jerusalem in 586 BCE. Zedekiah's sons were killed, and he was taken prisoner to Babylon (2 Kgs 24.18–25.7). The accounts in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles differ in

[80] See above, p.50.

detail, but it is clear that apart from his son Jehoahaz, who reigned only three months, Josiah was the last Davidic king to inherit freely.

There is an enigmatic postscript to the story of Josiah and his purges in some oracles appended to Zechariah, which look forward to the glorious restoration of Jerusalem and the Davidic kings. The oracles use the language of the royal cult: a synonym of beloved, *yāḥîd*, is *dôd*, more familiar as the name David; and 'firstborn', *bekôr*, is a coronation title of the Davidic king (Ps.89.28).

> On that day ... the house of David shall be like *'elohîm*, like the angel of the LORD before them. (Zech.12.8, translating literally)
>
> And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourns for the *beloved/only child* and they shall weep over him as one weeps for the *firstborn*. (Zech.12.10b, translating literally)

The mourning would be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. Now the plain of Megiddo might refer only to a Canaanite mourning custom there, but, in this context of the Davidic dynasty, it is more likely to refer to Josiah who was pierced there. If so, then it was the people of Jerusalem who would be penitent, mourning because they had pierced him who was the LORD, the Beloved, the Firstborn, the last of the sacral kings in Jerusalem. In the future, warned the prophet, they would regret the killing of Josiah. The restored house of David would be once more like the angel of the LORD with his people. Such a reading of Zechariah would explain why the D writer omitted the 'piercing' that killed Josiah, and it would also explain why the passage was used as a Christian proof text (Jn 19.37; Rev.1.7). It would also suggest that Josiah had been a puppet of the 'reformers', and was killed by his own people in revenge for the purges, for the Chronicler does not say whose archers shot the king. It was the people of the land who took his son to be the next king (2 Kgs 23.30; 2 Chron.36.1).

Ezekiel recorded all this turmoil as a lament for the princes of Israel and for their Mother who had lost all her royal sons. This cannot have been a lament for one particular queen-mother, as the last kings in Jerusalem had several mothers; it was a lament for the Lady. First she was praised as a great lioness whose cubs had been captured (Ezek.19.1-9),[81] and then as a vine. There is gender confusion in this text and a mixture of singular and plural, which makes accurate translation a problem: some lines describe the Lady and some her son, the ruler.

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[81] See above, pp.158–9.

> Your (sing.) mother was like the vine in your (sing.) vineyard,
> transplanted by the waters,
> fruitful and full of branches because of the abundant waters.
> She had strong branches, to be the sceptres of rulers,
> She was exalted in height among the foliage,
> He was seen in his height among his many branches.
> She was plucked up in anger and thrown to the ground
> And a wind from the east dried her up, they stripped her fruit
> They dried up the rod of her strength,
> A fire consumed him.
> And now she is transplanted to the desert, to a dry and thirsty land,
> And fire has gone out from the stem of her branches, and consumed her fruit,
> and she no longer has a strong rod, a sceptre to rule. (Ezek.19.10-14, my translation)

First, the poem confirms that the royal sceptres were branches of the Lady, and presumably also the branch as imagery for the Messiah originated with her (e.g. Isa.11.1; Zech.3.8; 6.12). Second, it seems that one of her own branches brought forth the fire that destroyed her fruit, her wisdom. Third, she had been transplanted to a desert place, which is where Enoch saw her on his second spirit journey: 'And from there I was taken to the center of the earth, and I saw a blessed place in which were trees—with branches alive and sprouting from a felled tree.'[82] The Qumran community described themselves as 'the branches of the Council of Holiness',[83] and may well have preserved the older Wisdom tradition. The Lady was not destroyed: she and her branches survived, and they knew she would one day return to her temple. Michael told Enoch:

> As for this fragrant tree, no flesh has authority to touch it until the Great Judgement, when he takes vengeance on all and brings everything to eternal consummation. Then it will be given to the righteous and holy. From its fruit, life will be given to the chosen; and it will be transplanted towards the north, to a holy place beside the House of the Lord, the Eternal King.[84]

The Lady, then, went to the south.

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[82] *1 Enoch* 26.1, tr. D. Olson, *Enoch. A New Translation,* North Richland Hills: Bibal Press, 2004.
[83] *Thanksgiving Hymns*, 1QH XV.10.
[84] *1 Enoch* 25.4-5, tr. Olson.

The Genesis Eden

Ezekiel's Eden oracles were a sequel to Genesis 1 and described the fall of the glorious heavenly Adam. He gave two descriptions of the Lady leaving the temple: first, in the visions of the throne chariot, when he saw the appearances of the Forms of the throne and Adam leaving the temple; and second when he described the effect of their departure, the fall of the cherub/royal high priest from his angelic state to a mortal state and so to ashes on the earth. This was Ezekiel the priest giving a priest's explanation of the disaster. There are, however, several things omitted from Ezekiel's picture: there is nothing about how the cherub was created, only its roles and how it was clothed; and there is nothing about the trees that must have been growing there if Eden was the garden of *'elohîm*.

Genesis 2–3 tells the same story, but differently. It too is a sequel to Genesis 1, the canonical sequel; it too is set in the temple; and it too assumes certain details that are not given in the text. Where did the snake come from? How did the human pair know they were naked? Had they lost their clothing by listening to the snake? This is what the storyteller implies. And where did all those later details come from, about Adam's garments of light, for example, or the LORD sitting on a throne by the tree of life, which must have been in Eden (Rev.22.1-5)?[85] The writers [and readers] of Genesis 2–3 knew more about Adam than is written in the Genesis text, and this tradition of understanding, still known by the first Christians, must be set alongside any reading of the text.

Eden encoded the story of the temple and the priesthood. The *Testament of Levi*[86] had the patriarch prophesy the wicked behaviour of his descendents; their sins, he said, would cause the destruction of the LORD's sanctuary. After the judgement, a new priest would appear, and in this glorious time, the ancient prophecies would be fulfilled. Several of the prophecies and expectations mentioned in the *Testament of Levi* are not usually thought to refer to the priesthood, but if this is how they were later understood within the same culture, then the priesthood probably was their original context.

- 'The spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him', alludes to Isaiah 11.2 even though the original text does not say 'sanctification'. The gift of the Spirit, then, was thought to confer sanctification, a divine state.
- 'The knowledge of the LORD will be poured out on the earth like the water of the seas ...' (Isa.11.9) was another characteristic of the time of the new priest.

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[85] Also *Life of Adam and Eve* 22.3-4; 2 *Enoch* 8.3.

[86] The form we have is probably from the end of the second temple period.

- 'He shall open the gates of paradise; he shall remove the sword that has threatened since Adam, and he will grant to the saints to eat of the tree of life' (alluding to Gen.3.22-24).[87]

The third of these is the most interesting for our inquiry, because the risen LORD, dressed as a high priest (Rev.1.13),[88] told John that he would allow the faithful to eat [again] from the tree of life (Rev.2.7).

The Qumran community saw themselves as already restored to the garden or perhaps being themselves the garden that was protecting one particular growth from the Tree, the 'branch', *neşer*, which was hidden in their plantation of trees. This alluded to the *neşer* of Isaiah's prophecy of the restoration of the Lady's son:[89]

> There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse
> And a branch, *neşer*, shall grow out of his roots,
> And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
> The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
> The spirit of counsel and might
> The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. (Isa.11.1-2)

They sang of streams in a dry land, which may literally describe the location of their community, but the spirits and the whirling flame of fire are clearly an allusion to the Genesis Eden story.

> I thank [ ] that you have set me by a fountain of streams in a dry land, (by) a spring of waters in a dry land ...
> A plantation of juniper, elm and cedar, all together for your glory, trees of
> life (i.e. living trees) at a secret fountain, hidden in the midst of all the trees by the water, there so that a shoot, *neşer*, might sprout into an planting of eternity.
> Taking root, they made it sprout, and they sent out their roots to the water. Its root was open to the living water (i.e. water of life)
> Which served as an eternal fountain (or fountain of eternity) ...
> That which made the holy shoot grow into a plant of truth hides itself without
> being esteemed or recognised, sealing up its mystery. And you O God, have put a hedge round its fruit by the mystery of strong warriors

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[87] All these quotations are from *T.Levi* 18.

[88] The long linen robe and *golden* girdle were only worn by a high priest, see my book *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000, pp.84–5.

[89] See above, pp.65, 104.

and spirits of holiness and the whirling flame of fire, so that no [ ] might
[ ] to the fountain of life nor, with the trees of eternity,
Drink the holy waters ...[90]

One context for reading Genesis 2–3 must be *1 Enoch*, which preserves most detail about the fallen angels. The original myth is told in the earliest part of the book, and there are two versions of the story, one naming the rebel leader as Shemiḥazah, the other as Asael, who appears in Leviticus 16, 8 and 10 as Azazel. He and his 200 followers made a counter covenant on Mount Hermon and then came to earth to teach their knowledge and their skills, but in rebellion against the Great Holy One. The skills were metal working for weapons and jewellery, magic, and astrology/astronomy. The result was bloodshed and unrighteousness, and then the judgement.[91] When Isaiah described the sins of his people, it was not in terms of breaking the Law of Moses but as the sins taught by the fallen angels: magic, weapons and the money made from them, idolatry, pride and vanity (Isa.2.6-11; 3.16-23). The *Dream Visions* of Enoch tell how the angels fell: first their leader, and then a host of them[92] corresponding to the snake in Eden and later the descent of the sons of God (Gen.6.1-4). For Isaiah, this must have been linked to the prosperity in the reign of Uzziah (2 Chron.26.1-15), but also to the rift within the priesthood at that time, when Uzziah was punished with leprosy. The Chronicler said of Uzziah that his kingdom had large herds and fertile lands for 'he loved the soil' (2 Chron.26.10), a marked contrast to the state of the land that followed Adam and Eve's encounter with the serpent (Gen.3.17-19); to Isaiah's warning of the state of a land that had rejected Wisdom (Isa.6.11-12); and to the state of the land after rejecting the Queen of Heaven, according to the refugees in Egypt (Jer.44.18).

Since the fallen angels in Genesis encode the Jerusalem priesthood just before the destruction of Jerusalem, the sins of the fallen angels must be those of the priests – the abuse of their heavenly knowledge, used in rebellion against the Great Holy One. It has often been suggested that the Deuteronomists came from the north, although this has only ever been speculation, but it is interesting that the fallen angels also came from the north, from Mount Hermon. The Enochic *Apocalypse of Weeks* confirms that the disaster was caused by temple priests. In the sixth week – the latter part of the first temple period – all who lived in the temple lost their vision and their hearts/minds, godlessly forsook Wisdom. It was in this sixth week that Isaiah ascended – his vision in Isaiah 6 – and gave his warning about

[90] *Thanksgiving Hymns* 1 QH XVI. 5-9, 11-14.

[91] *1 Enoch* 6–10. There are variant forms of the story. In *1 Enoch* the angels are attracted to beautiful human women and so come to earth and teach; in *Jubilees*, the angels come to teach and are then attracted to the women. Either way, their wisdom was corrupted.

[92] *1 Enoch* 86.1, 3.

the consequences of rejecting Wisdom.[93] The cultural revolution that ousted the Lady lasted for many generations, as implied in the Enochic *Dream Visions* which do not mention the 'reforms' of the temple in the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah. This was the time when the LORD abandoned his people to foreign powers which are described as various wild animals. The people abandoned the house of the LORD and his tower, and so the LORD abandoned them 'because those sheep had asked for that slaughter'.[94] Another possible translation is: 'those sheep had invited that murderer'[95] a reference to Ahaz's appeal to the king of Assyria for help against Syria and Israel who were allied against him. Ahaz took the temple treasure as a gift to the king (2 Kgs 16.7-9).

The Genesis Eden story concerns two trees: the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that would lead to death (Gen.2.17). *Both were in Eden, so both were in the temple*. The tree of life was the ancient symbol of the Lady and her Wisdom in the temple; the other tree, which the LORD had warned against and forbidden, must have represented the alternative to Wisdom which had been established in the temple. It represented the woman who appears in Proverbs as the rival to Wisdom, as the stranger, *zār* , the alien, *nokrîy* , with her smooth words (Prov.2.16; also Prov.5.3-6; 7.5-23). In the Third Isaiah she was the harlot on the hilltop (Isa.57.7-10);[96] in the Qumran texts she was the unnamed wicked woman[97] and in Revelation she was 'the great harlot seated on many waters' who was judged and burned before the Lady could return (Rev.17.1; 19.1-3).

The snake made the two trees seem identical: the forbidden tree would open their eyes, so that they knew good and evil, and they would become like *'elohîm*. The woman saw that the tree was good for food, a delight to the eyes, and would make her wise (Gen.3.4-6). This meeting of the woman and the snake encodes the meeting of Wisdom and her rival in the temple. It may not be coincidence that the mysterious book which prompted Josiah's purges was 'found' in the temple (2 Kgs 22.8). In order to read the snake's words in context, it is necessary to anticipate a later part of this investigation, and look briefly at some Wisdom symbols: oil and bread.

According to later texts the tree of life was remembered as the source of the perfumed temple oil that was used for anointing, and it conferred 'most holiness' on whatever it touched (Exod.30.29). It was the 'dew' mentioned in Psalm 110.3 that transformed a man into an angel king and made him a son of the LORD. Later texts say the oil had been kept in the holy of holies, and that the high priests had been marked on their foreheads with an X,

[93] *1 Enoch* 93.8.
[94] *1 Enoch* 89.54.
[95] M. Black, *The Book of Enoch*, Leiden: Brill, 1985, p.270.
[96] See above, pp.195–7.
[97] 4Q184, sometimes called the Seductress or Dame Folly. No name has survived in the actual texts.

the sign of the Name, and then on their eyelids to open their eyes. This marking is what Ezekiel described in his vision of the angel scribe marking the faithful (Ezek.9.4); and the Enochic *Apocalypse of Weeks* said that when the people in the temple rejected Wisdom, their eyes were no longer opened; they became 'blind'.[98] This is because the perfumed oil was lost or hidden away in the time of Josiah.[99] The Branch, *neṣer*, who received the Spirit and manifold gift of Wisdom, was then *perfumed* (Isa.11.3, but the word *rîaḥ* is incorrectly translated 'delight' in most versions). Wisdom longed to pour out her Spirit on those who had rejected her (Prov.1.23). Wisdom herself proclaimed that she was the oil in the temple 'Like cassia and camel's thorn I gave forth the aroma of spices, and like choice myrrh I spread a pleasant odour ...' (Ben Sira 24.15). This means that when she was rejected, her oil and all that it symbolised, was lost from the temple.

All this was known to the early Christians. The risen LORD spoke to John and sent a message to the church at Laodicea. He spoke as Wisdom, 'the Amon, ... the beginning of God's creation' (Rev.3.14).[100] He offered that failing community gold for true riches, white garments to cover their naked state, and salve to anoint their eyes so that they could see. These were what Adam and Eve had lost: their [white linen] garments of glory and their sight. In the *Clementine Recognitions*, 'Peter' explained: 'The Son of God, the beginning of all things, became man ... He was the first whom God anointed with oil taken from the wood of the tree of life ... In the present life, Aaron the high priest was anointed with a blended chrism, made after the pattern of the spiritual ointment ... How potent then, was that ointment extracted by God from a branch of the tree of life.'[101]

In Eden, the snake said the forbidden tree would open the eyes, so that they knew good and evil, and they would become like *'ᵉlohîm*, here meaning angels. This had been the function of the oil from the tree of life: the anointed ones became angels, as can be seen in Enoch's description of his own anointing in the holy of holies/heaven: '[Michael] anointed me and clothed me. And the appearance of that oil is greater than the greatest light, and its ointment is like sweet dew, and its fragrance myrrh. It is like the rays of the glittering sun. And I looked at myself and I had become like one of his glorious ones ...'[102] Since temple anointing had been on the eyelids, this must have symbolised opening the eyes. The snake was presenting his tree as equivalent to the tree of life. The woman's response confirms this, and temple wordplay is apparent in her words. She saw that the tree was good for food, a delight to the eyes, and would make her wise.

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[98] *1 Enoch* 93.8.

[99] Babylonian Talmud *Horayoth* 12a; Tosefta *Kippurim* 2.15.

[100] See my book *The Revelation*, op.cit., n.88, pp.112–13.

[101] *Clementine Recognitions* I.45-46, a text from the early Christian period. We shall return to the tradition of the oil in volume 2.

[102] *2 Enoch* 22.9-10.

The temple cult had involved eating before the throne, as did the elders on Sinai (Exod.24.11). The most likely food was the 'bread of the presence' that was set out on a table in the tabernacle/temple (Exod.25.23-30), but nothing more is said in the Hebrew Scriptures of its role in the cult. But Wisdom invited people to her table to feed them bread and wine. This would turn them away from 'simpleness' so that they could live, walk in a straight path, and have discernment (Prov.9.5-6). 'Simpleness', *p^e^tayyiût*, is a word found only here in the Hebrew Scriptures, and is thought to derive from the verb *pth*, which can mean 'be simple' but most commonly means 'be deceived/enticed', as in 'Do not deceive with your lips' (Prov.24.28). Wisdom offered her bread to those who had been *deceived*, so that they could walk [?again] on a *straight* path, a word derived from *'šr*. This word is also the root for Ashratah and the word *'ašrê*, usually translated '*Blessed* is the man ...' (Ps.1.1). For Ezekiel, the temple had to be cleansed from the sins of 'any one who has sinned through error, or ignorance' (Ezek.45.20): 'error' is from the root *šgh*, and ignorance from the root *pth*, deception. Deception had polluted the temple. Wordplay here also suggests another meaning for *šgh*, which was written in the same way as *śgh*, 'grow great'.

Wisdom fed her disciples with the bread of understanding and the water of wisdom' (Ben Sira 15.3, although here Wisdom is equated with the law),[103] and Wisdom's bread was remembered as the bread of the presence. According to the traditional Jewish commentaries, 'Wisdom's table is the bread of the presence and wine';[104] and according to R. Samuel b. Naḥman, who lived in Palestine in the third century CE, Melchizedek instructed Abram in the laws of priesthood and gave him the bread of the presence and the wine. The bread and wine of Wisdom's table (Prov.9.5) was then said to be the Law. The bread of the presence was remembered as Wisdom's food from the time of Melchizedek.[105] The earliest Christian Eucharistic prayer outside the New Testament gives thanks for the bread: 'We give thanks to thee our Father, for the life and knowledge which thou hast made known to us through thy servant Jesus,'[106] and Jesus too was described as Melchizedek (Heb.7.15-17).

The woman saw that the fruit of the forbidden tree was the equivalent of Wisdom's food, and this marked the beginning of the later substitution of the law for Wisdom. It was the storyteller's version of Deuteronomy 4.6: '[The law] will be your wisdom, *ḥokmāh*, and your understanding, *bînāh*, in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people".' The tree also offered a substitute for the holy oil. The woman saw that the tree was 'a delight to the eyes' (Gen.3.6), literally 'a desire, *t^a^'awāh*, for the eyes', where the same root *'āwāh* can also mean to mark. This was an allusion to

[103] How the wisdom material was reworked as 'law' will be explored in volume 2.
[104] *Leviticus Rabbah* XI.9.
[105] *Genesis Rabbah* XLIII.6.
[106] *Didache* 9.

oil from the tree of life 'marking' the eyes for their spiritual opening. She also saw that the tree 'was to be desired to make one *wise*'. The word here is *śkl*, better translated prudent/discerning, and it was the gift promised to the servant of the LORD in Isaiah 52.13: 'Behold my servant shall become discerning' (from the root *śkl*). He would then be exalted and *anointed*, according to both the Qumran text and Targum,[107] rather than 'marred', which was an innovation from the correcting scribes.

This was the first appearance in scripture of 'the ancient serpent ... the deceiver of the whole world' (Rev.12.9). Did the serpent have his customary appearance, or was the serpent figure a disguise for another being whose words would have been accepted as coming from the LORD? Now the throne that Isaiah saw in the holy of holies was flanked by seraphim, literally 'fiery snakes', and the LORD had told Moses to make a *śārāp*, seraph, as protection against snake bites. Moses then made a bronze snake, *nāḥāš*, (Num.21.8-9), whence the name Nehustan, which Hezekiah would later destroy, even though it had been venerated from time immemorial. The seraph that purified Isaiah's lips was one of these snake figures, but with hands and a voice: it carried the burning coal with tongs and it brought the words of the LORD to the prophet (Isa.6.6-7). A talking snake was a divine messenger, part of Isaiah's temple world, and so a snake speaking evil would have been a fallen angel disguised as a true messenger. Elsewhere there were depictions of a goddess standing on a lion and holding snakes, suggesting that the snake was a one of her symbols,[108] although there is nothing in the Ugaritic texts to link Athirat and a snake. Wiggins was correct to warn against elaborate structures of association in this respect.[109]

The rebranding of the snake was successful. It became a symbol of evil, and the vision in Revelation has preserved the context of the ancient conflict. The serpent stood in the temple, before the Woman clothed with the sun, and her child was taken up to the throne of God. *The conflict was between the serpent and the Mother of the LORD in the temple*. In Revelation the serpent was defeated and the child escaped to the throne he was intended to occupy, but in Genesis, the serpent succeeded, and Adam was driven from Eden rather than, as the non-canonical material shows, occupying the throne in heaven as had been intended.[110] The storyteller predicted/hoped for a future conflict between the children of the snake and the children of the woman, in which the snake would be overcome (Gen.3.14), and a later disciple of Isaiah looked forward to the day when Jerusalem would be restored, the whole creation renewed, and the serpent on the holy mountain would be eating dust (Isa. 65.25).

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[107] The Isaiah Scroll, 1QIsa[a] has *mšḥty*, anointed, where the current Hebrew has *mšḥt*, marred.
[108] For example the Winchester Relief, see above pp.113–14.
[109] S. Wiggins, 'The Myth of Asherah: Lion Lady and Serpent Goddess', Ugarit-Forschungen 23 (1991), pp.383–94.
[110] *Life of Adam and Eve* 12–15, where the angels are commanded to worship Adam, the newly created image of the LORD.

Even though the temple is not mentioned in Genesis 2–3, there are unmistakable allusions to it: the LORD God formed the male-and-female Adam from dust of the ground, and then breathed into Adam's nostrils/face the breath of life and s/he became a living being. This was not simply bringing the creature of dust to life; it was transforming the Adam of dust into another form of life. This image was used by the early Christians in the context of baptism, and the additional imagery points to its temple roots:

My eyes were enlightened,
And my face received the dew;
My breath was refreshed
By the pleasant fragrance of the LORD.
And he took me to his Paradise,
Wherein is the wealth of the LORD's pleasure.[111]

The Adam of dust in this Christian baptismal hymn is enlightened and anointed ['dew'], and his very self is transformed by the fragrant anointing oil before he goes to Paradise. The origin of all this is the royal rituals in the holy of holies, glimpsed in the damaged text of Psalm 110. The Adam in Genesis 2 was created from dust, transformed by the breath [and the anointing oil] and then set in Eden, the temple, as the image of God.

Thus the Genesis storyteller said that the LORD God put the male-and-female Adam into the garden 'to till it and to keep it' (Gen.2.15), and this was temple language too. The verb *'ābad*, till, also means to serve a liturgy, and the verb *šāmar*, keep, also means to preserve the teaching. Traditional Jewish interpretations did not even consider that Adam was a gardener. The debate was: did it mean to serve/work for six days and then preserve/keep the Sabbath (Deut.5.12-13); or did it mean to serve God by perfoming the sacred rituals and keeping the festivals and words of the covenant (Exod.3.12; Deut.29.9).[112] *Jubilees* tells the story differently, but still in a temple setting; male-and-female were created and separated into two outside the garden, and then each had to observe the post-natal purity law for a male and a female: Adam had to wait 40 days before entering the garden, and Eve had to wait 80.[113] In the priestly law code, these were the periods of impurity for a mother after she had given birth to a boy or a girl (Lev.12.2-5), but in *Jubilees*, the 'birth' of Adam and Eve was reckoned from the time of their separation into man and woman.

When the human pair in the Genesis Eden – for they were by now man and woman – listened to the snake, 'they knew they were naked' (Gen 3.7),

[111] *Odes of Solomon* 11.14-16. J. H. Bernard, *Odes of Solomon*, Cambridge, 1912.
[112] *Genesis Rabbah* XVI.5.
[113] *Jubilees* 3.4-14.

which implies that they had formerly been clothed. Again, this is an allusion to the high priestly garment of Wisdom which Adam had originally worn, known in later tradition and doubtless to the original hearers of this story.[114] When they made themselves garments of fig leaves to replace what they had lost, the verb is written *yitpᵉrû*, 'they sewed', almost identical in written form and sound to *yitpā'rû* meaning 'they got themselves glory' [from the high priestly vestments] (as in Exod. 28.2, 40).[115] Their new glory was fig leaves. *Jubilees* does not allude to the priestly garments, but says that when Adam left the garden, he offered temple incense: 'frankincense, galbanum, stacte and sweet spices'.[116] This was the blend specified as 'most holy', and it was forbidden to use it outside the tabernacle/temple (Exod. 30.34-38).

The second tree was the law, the replacement for wisdom introduced towards the end of the first temple period, and the serpent, disguised as a messenger from the LORD, made it seem exactly like the original tree. Too late did the human pair discover that it led to death and not to life. There is a curious similarity between the words used to describe the second tree and the sequence in Psalm 19.7-9 which describes the law of the LORD. Clines, in his study of this psalm, proposed: 'that the author of Ps.xixB intended by his allusions to Gen.ii-iii to assert the superiority of the law to the tree of knowledge as a means of obtaining wisdom'.[117]

> The law, *tôrāh*, of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;
> The testimony, *'ēdût*, of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
> The precepts, *piqqûdîm*, of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
> The commandment, *miṣwāh*, of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;
> The fear, *yir'āh*, of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever;
> The ordinances, *mišpātîm*, of the LORD are true and righteous
> altogether. (Ps.19.7-9)

The similarity is obvious, but the context may be more complex than a simple contrast between the law and the second tree, because the second tree represented the law.

The answer may lie in the original liturgical context of this composite psalm, which divides into three distinct sections. Wyatt proposed, on the basis of Ugaritic material, that the psalm originated in the royal anointing rituals that were the 'birth' of the king.[118] The first section, vv.1-6, he understood as the myth of the divine marriage: El as the moon and the Lady as the sun, and their meeting in the heavens. He translated vv.4b-6:

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114 See above, pp.350–1.
115 The difference is an *aleph*, which is silent.
116 *Jubilees* 3.27.
117 D. J. Clines, 'The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of Yahweh (Psalm XIX)', Vetus Testamentum XXIV.1 (1974), pp.8–14, p.8.
118 N. Wyatt, 'The Liturgical Context of Psalm 19', Ugarit-Forschungen 27 (1995), pp.559–96.

> For Sun he set a tent in them,
> while he as bridegroom goes forth from his chamber.
> He rejoices as a hero running a race.
> From the extremity of the heavens is his emergence,
> and the completion of his circuit is at their limits,
> and there is no concealment from his pavilion. (Ps.19.4b-6, Wyatt's translation)

He concluded: 'The first part of the psalm is indeed composite: it is a liturgy constructed out of various ancient mythological fragments, which narrate in an allusive way the *hieros gamos* between El, the moon-god, and his bride, the sun-goddess. The offspring of this holy connubium is the king himself, mythologically Athtar, the Morning Star.'[119] This was the myth underlying Psalm 110, where the divine son was named the Morning Star.[120] In Jerusalem, the divine child was Yahweh, manifested as the Davidic king, the Firstborn of El and the Lady, the Lamb who married the Bride (Rev.19.7).

Wyatt suggested that the second section of the psalm described the anointing of the king as he was given the Law of Yahweh. '[These are] a series of blessing formulae, pronounced by a priest rather than by the king himself, who locates various linguistic metaphors for divine power in parts of the king's body, chest (or throat), head, heart and eyes, which he touches in turn, perhaps actually transmitting these divine gifts to the king in this rite ... A king is the mouthpiece of the gods ... It is important that he is granted the power to communicate such matters which are a matter of life and death to the community he rules.'[121]

- The law of the LORD – *mᵉšîbat nepeš*, reviving the life/the whole person.
- The testimony of the LORD – *maḥkîmat petî*, making the simple wise, where Wyatt proposed reading *pôt*, head/forehead, on the basis of cognate languages: 'making wise the head'.
- The precepts of the LORD – *mᵉśammᵉḥê lēb* making the heart/mind rejoice.
- The commandment of the LORD – *mᵉ'îrat ʿênnayim* enlightening the eyes.
- The fear of the LORD – *ʿômedet lāʿad* enduring for ever, where many have proposed reading *ʿimrat*, 'words of' for *yir'at*, 'fear of': 'the words of the LORD endure forever'.[122]
- The ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous.

[119] Ibid., p.588.
[120] See above, p.125.
[121] Wyatt, op.cit., n.118 above, p.590.
[122] E.g. C. A. and E. G. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 1. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1907, p.173.

The similarity to the tree of knowledge is undoubtedly there, and its origin in the anointing ritual is an interesting possibility, but the snake was making his tree seem exactly like the tree of life. All the descriptions in Psalm 19 apply to the tree of life: 'reviving the life', 'making "the simple" wise', 'making the heart/mind rejoice', 'enlightening the eyes' and 'enduring for ever'. The comparison in Psalm 19 is with the tree of life, whose gifts were conferred on the king when he was anointed with its oil. This was the law that Yahweh, Wisdom's divine son, gave to the anointed one. This section of the psalm concludes:

> More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold,
> Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. (Ps.19.10)

This is 'characteristic of Hebrew Wisdom rather than of Hebrew Law'.[123] Wisdom as the tree of life was 'better than gain from silver ... better than gold' (Prov.3.14; 8.8-21; also Job 28.12-19). The remembrance of Wisdom was 'sweeter than honey' and her inheritance 'sweeter than the honeycomb' (Ben Sira 24.20). Thus the composite Psalm 19 could preserve the ancient anointing ritual and its ancient context, and offer glimpses of the law of the LORD when it was still wisdom, before it became the Law of Moses.

After taking the fruit in Eden, the man and the woman knew they were naked, *'êrom*, very similar in written form to *'iwrîm*, blind; but also to *'îrîm*, the watching angels who guarded the covenant, formerly in Isaiah 33.8 and appear as 'the blind' who had formerly guarded the city (2 Sam.5.6),[124] both examples having received the attention of the correcting scribes. The bread of the presence had been the 'fruit' of the Wisdom's tree, the most holy food to be eaten by the high priests in the temple. 'Most holy' implies that it imparted holiness, and the Hebrew text here says: '*She* shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it ...' (Lev.24.9, translating literally).[125]

The clearest wordplay, however, is with 'cunning', *'ārûm*, the characteristic of the snake. The man and woman were 'blind and naked' was also the state of the church in Laodicea (Rev.3.17), who were warned to return to the ways of Wisdom. As they left the garden, the LORD made for them garments of skin, *'ôr*, to replace their garments of light, *'ôr* they had lost.[126] Rabbi Meir's copy of Genesis, which had come from the temple after the destruction in 70 CE, in Jerusalem, still had 'light' in the text.[127] When they were clothed in their garments of skin, that is, when they became mortal, Adam named his wife Eve, 'because she was the mother of all living' (Gen.3.20). Her name *ḥawwāh* is very similar in written form and sound to *ḥayyāh*, the Living

[123] Ibid., p.170.

[124] R. Murray, 'Prophecy and Cult' in R. Coggins, ed. *Israel's Prophetic Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp.200–16, pp.205–7.

[125] See my book *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*, London: T&T Clark, 2007, p.211.

[126] *Genesis Rabbah* XX.12.

[127] J. P. Siegel, *The Severus Scroll*, Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975.

One whom Ezekiel had seen leaving the temple. She too was the mother of all life. The Lady left her temple and became mortal, and her teaching also fell to earth. The revelations of her angels about the secrets of the creation and the mystery of life, were edited into the harmless folk sayings of the canonical 'wisdom' texts. Hezekiah, who removed the bronze serpent that had long been venerated (2 Kgs 18.4), was also responsible for transcribing a collection of uncontroversial proverbs (Prov.25.1; 25–29). These two actions were not unrelated.

The departure from Eden marked a change in world view, and the story so often regarded as the greatest myth in the Bible was in fact the last myth. It marked the transition to history, which is where it now appears. Myth gave way to sacred history as the Lady was superseded by Moses. Her removal was not, as is usually said, the purification of the temple from alien ways. It was a complete change in every aspect of life, because myth is an all-encompassing world view. Barr summarised the situation thus:

> In ancient times, myth was not a picture language ... The centre of mythology, or at any rate its characteristic which is specially significant in relation to Biblical material, is its doctrine of correspondences. Myth always maintains a secret correspondence or hidden harmony of some kind between gods and men, gods and nature, man and nature, the normative primeval and the actual present. The correspondence is ... not merely figurative but ontological ... The correspondence is not only believed but enacted. Not only does myth teach the existence of the harmony, but ritual ensures that the harmony will in fact exist ...
>
> In Israel, the correspondence pattern of mythology was broken ... But whether [the fragments of mythology] are so called or not, they now have to be understood in their relation to a totality which is shaped largely by its repudiation of the characteristic mythological correspondence ... The importance of history in the Israelite mind was the greatest factor in enforcing the differences from the mythological environment.[128]

The role of the sacral king had been as the *mošēl*, the one who maintained the correspondence of heaven and earth, and the Lady held all things together.

The Lady was not forgotten, especially by those who prayed 'On earth as it is in heaven'. Paul knew the image of the tree and its fruit (Gal.5.22) as did John, who saw the fruiting tree restored to the holy of holies (Rev.22.2). One of the Eden stories known in the early years of the Church is found in the *Apocalypse of Moses*. Eve told how the snake sprinkled the fruit of his tree with covetousness, and so she ate it. 'For covetousness is the origin of

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[128] J. Barr, 'The Meaning of "Mythology" in Relation to the Old Testament', Vetus Testamentum IX (1959), pp.1–10, pp.3, 6, 7.

every sin.'[129] If Paul knew this story, it would explain some of his complex arguments in Romans, and show that he was thinking, as he wrote, of the second tree as the law.

> Yet if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.' But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died; the very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me. (Rom.7.7-11)

The *Gospel of Philip* is a collection of Christian teaching set within temple tradition. Temple tradition used 'man' to indicate an angel, e.g. 'the man Gabriel' (Dan.9.21) or 'he measured its wall ... by a man's measure, that is, and angel's' (Rev. 21.17); and it used animals to indicate human beings, e.g. the parable of the sheep and the goats (Mt.25.31-46). Given this background, there are some interesting texts in the *Gospel of Philip*. There are texts about the two trees, but nothing certain can be built upon them because they are too broken. The second tree as the law which changed angel beings into mortals is a possible context for one of them.

> There are two trees growing in Paradise. The one bears [animals] the other bears men. Adam [ate] from the tree which bore animals. [He] became an animal and brought forth animals. For this reason, the children of Adam worship animals. The tree [whose] fruit [Adam ate] is the [tree of knowledge] that is why [sins] increased. [If he] ate the [fruit of the other tree, that is to say the] fruit of [the tree of life, the one which] bears men, [then the gods would] worship man ...[130]

Another rather confused text seems to equate the tree with the law.

> The law was the tree. It has power to give the knowledge of good and evil. It neither removed him from evil, nor did it set him in the good, but it created death for those who ate of it ...[131]

The first describes Adam's fall to mortal state after eating from the second tree, whereas had he eaten from the tree of life, he would have been an angel. It alludes to the story in *The Life of Adam and Eve*,[132] that all the

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[129] *Apocalypse of Moses* 19.3.
[130] *Gospel of Philip* CG II.3.71
[131] Ibid., CG II.3.74.
[132] A Latin text that is almost the same as the Greek *Apocalypse of Moses*.

angels were commanded to worship Adam the image of the LORD, but Satan refused, was cast from heaven, and the second tree was his revenge, to ensure that Adam too was cast out.[133] Had Adam chosen to eat from the tree of life – the original plan – the angels would have worshipped him in heaven. The second extract is like Paul's reflection on the law. This theme appears also in the traditional Ethiopian understanding of the work of the fallen angels: 'the transmutation of the world',[134] which commentators said meant changing a man into an animal or vice versa. This was indeed the work of the fallen angels, who reduced Adam from his angel self to mortality.

The story of the garden of Eden is now set as the preface to the Hebrew Scriptures, the beginning of the Books of Moses. This Eden story appears nowhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures, a warning that, even though it has been set at the beginning, it is in fact an ending. The texts have come to be read as the story of a chosen people, who defined themselves by a body of law and a sacred history, but they tell another story too.

> I thought about the dynamic of the fallen world. The law is how society defends itself against the destructive chaos created by sin and the fall. Under the dominion of the law, everything – culture, religion, politics – serves the law and expresses it. It is *style* in art, *morality* in religion, *hierarchy* in society. Construction, creativity are under the law. But since the law is by essence limiting, it provokes opposition not only by evil and sin, (criminality), but also by the undying thirst of man for 'grace', freedom, unlimited space, Spirit.
>
> Law, (according to St Paul), inevitably provokes a desire to overcome it, to get beyond one's self. Then starts a crisis quite obvious in religion, in culture, in politics. The forces that are generated by law as a barrier and a guard against chaos begin to deny that barrier and destroy it in the name of what is higher than the law. But the world remains fallen. The forces of law cannot create anything; they remain without grace, ambiguous, and even destructive (as can be seen in socialism, Freud, some new art). In the fallen world, there is no way out of these dynamics – the sublimation and overcoming of the law – there is none and there cannot be. The law is the true reflection of the fall; therefore it is right. The 'crisis' (the reaction against the law) reflects the truth of the search, the thirst, the freedom.
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> A. Schmemann, *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemann*, 1973–83, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002, entry for December 8th 1975

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[133] *Life of Adam and Eve* 12–16.
[134] *1 Enoch* 8.1.

POSTSCRIPT

The Lady of the Church

After the exile, the new Moses religion was established in the new Jerusalem, and there was a new spirit in the city. The people who kept to the older ways described her as the harlot or the strange, foreign woman. Jerusalem was burned by the Romans in 70 CE, and the heavens rejoiced that she had been destroyed with fire, the prescribed punishment for a priestly harlot (Rev.19.1-5; Lev.21.9). Only when the harlot had gone could the Lady of Jerusalem return. The Bride of the Lamb appeared, the heavens opened, and the Warrior came forth to bring judgement on evil and to establish his Kingdom. This was the scene in the ancient *Blessing of Moses*, but here recorded by John in the Book of Revelation and preserved as Christian Scripture.

In the second volume we shall trace the story of the Lady through her years of exile from Jerusalem, and then how she returned with the Christian proclamation that the Virgin had conceived [again] and borne a child. The Christian message was not only that the Messiah had come; it was also about the restoration of the Mother of the LORD to her temple. Mary was proclaimed as the Lady just as her Son was proclaimed as the LORD. The first two generations knew this, and it can be read between the lines of all four canonical gospels. Texts such as the *Infancy Gospel of James* were not later elaborations of the story but fuller accounts for the generation that needed the original understanding spelled out more clearly.

The return of the Lady accounts for the earliest recorded Jewish-Christian disputes over the text of the Hebrew Scriptures, the choice of books for the Jewish canon of Scripture, and the Christian [and original] way of understanding the Hebrew Scriptures. She was the formative influence on the style of the great churches built by Justinian; her ancient titles, even those not recorded in canonical texts, were known and used both in liturgy and in theological debate; and much, much later, the lost Lady of the first temple was to appear in ikons, in her ancient setting and with her traditional symbols.

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